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The Wedding Garment

Y91
P398W

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

THE

WEDDING GARMENT.

A Tale of the Life to Come.

BY

LOUIS PENDLETON,

AUTHOR OF "IN THE WIRE-GRASS," "KING TOM AND THE RUNAWAYS," ETC.

"It must be so, — Plato, thou reasonest well!
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
. . . . . .
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis Heaven itself that points out an hereafter."

ADDISON.

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THE WEDDING GARMENT.

I.

I DIE.

As a dyspeptic, I had so often envied the little animal called the sea-cucumber, which is said to possess the wonderful power of providing itself with a new stomach as soon as the old one has worn out; and yet, when it was intimated to me that I might die, that I might shortly put by my whole inert body, so worn and wasted with sickness, as one puts by a cast-off garment, and awake to consciousness in a more perfect and never-dying spiritual body above the realm of matter, I cannot say that I was pleased.

Not that I seriously doubted the basis of probability leading to the prospect held out to me by the grave, kindly man who had come to sit at my bedside and speak hopeful words; on the contrary, it had always seemed to me that there *must* be a God, and immortality for his creature, man. To die and never live again was to my mind a condition or destiny inexplicable, monstrous, impossible. The opposite idea had been inscribed, as it were, on my very heart from earliest childhood; but for years past it

had entered very little into my conscious thought, neither my friends nor I being what is called religious. Our thoughts were concerned with the world about us, not with eternity. And this was the cause of my pain: I loved the world, and would fain not bid it farewell; for, whatever may be said of the people in it, in part or in whole, or of the misfortunes which it is their lot to bear, it is a good, comfortable world, where one may find much to enjoy, much to love.

"You say that you dread to think of being buried and rotting in the ground," spoke the good friend at my bedside; "but *you* will not rot in the ground. It is your material body only which so decomposes."

"It's pretty much the same thing, isn't it?" I asked, somewhat listlessly, in a moment of depression. "These hands are to rot, these feet, these limbs, these eyes, this brain; and these make *me*."

"They make your corporeal garment which you wear during your sojourn in the lower world. The garment is not the man."

"Call it a mere garment if you like," I answered; "but the fact remains that when you take it away it is difficult to see what is left."

"The fact that you cannot see what is left with the eyes of your body is nothing of proof. We are compelled to believe in the existence of things which we cannot see. What is more real than our thoughts? And yet we cannot see them with the eyes of our body."

"Our thoughts and feelings are certainly as real as anything," I answered, passively.

"It is true," continued my friend, "that the eyes of our bodies are organs of sight, and we do see through them the things of this world, and we act upon these things by means of material muscles, being furnished with powers adequate to the ponderous objects surrounding us; but our reason sees that there must be some interior power, something within this mere instrument of flesh and blood. This something is the soul, or spiritual man; and it is this which lives, thinks, acts, — *is the very man himself.*

"You lose no more in being severed from your natural body than a cocoanut, for instance, loses when it is taken from its rough outer coat, or husk. Tear off this husk, and you still have the hard inclosing envelope, within which is the nut itself, with its inner deposit of milk; so, when at death you drop off the material covering given you for use during your stay in the natural world, there still exists your spiritual body, as an envelope and resting-place for your conscious mind and your inmost seat of life, or soul. All that is really valuable or of use for the higher plane of existence remains. You live, breathe, and move, the same human being that you were before, with only this difference, that you are immensely the gainer through the severance of your connection with the frail material body, which is part and parcel of the material world, — a mere coarse outer garment, so to speak, worn for a time and cast off when no longer needed."

All this appealed to my reason; I felt that it must be true, and yet — and yet there was a vague,

discomforting misgiving. All this might be true; but still there was the dying. If one only had not to die!

"The immortality of the soul of man," my earnest friend went on, "is typified in everything of nature. An over-ripe apple indeed falls to the ground and decays; but within its rotting heart there is a seed which, nourished by the soil, springs up into a new tree, and this in turn bears fruit containing new seed, in every one of which exist in potency all the apple-trees thus succeeding each other through countless years: so are we presented with an image of immortality and eternity.

"The same is typified even more directly in some of the lowest forms of the animal kingdom. What is afterwards a butterfly is at first a lowly worm, which presently enters the chrysalis state, and at the full time casts off its exuviæ, bursts its bonds, and rises into the upper air a beautiful winged creature, thus finding its heaven. For, while in its first state it was but a miserable worm chained to the ground, it now soars aloft, flits from flower to flower, and comes into all the joys of a higher life. So with man. At first comparatively but a grovelling worm, concerned only with the things of the earth earthy, he by death passes through his transition state, and enters upon an immeasurably more perfect existence."

Undoubtedly this was a labored discourse to be addressed to a dying man; but I was clear in mind, and sufficiently strong to listen without exhaustion to a little at a time, for several days after it was

decided that I could not live. My sister was anxious, as I could see; but the fact that I was more than ordinarily interested was not lost on her, and she made no opposition.

The minister came frequently, and, besides what is indicated above, and much more, talked to me of the great problem of human life, whence it is and whither it tends. He assured me that the natural universe was only a nursery or training school for man in his first plane of existence, the tendency being always and only, if things be in order, toward completion and perfection on a higher, super-material plane. Man, in this his first stage, is gifted with the power of looking upward to his Creator; from reason he can comprehend the difference between good and evil, and from liberty he is able to cultivate one and shun the other, and thus become regenerate, — so placing himself in accord with the end, or design, of his creation; for the great end or object of all creation is a heaven from the human race.

"Talk to my sister," I said at last, a weariness upon me; "it may help her more than me to hear these things."

Of a truth, I was weary, and the time was past for listening to and meditating upon such ideas as these. The world was fading away. The days and nights began to come and go in uneventful, unmarked succession, like two mistily-distinct phases in a dream. But once, in a lucid interval, I saw the doctor bending over me, and heard my sister stifle a sob as he spoke to her in a low tone. "I am dying, then," was my thought, — "dying."

It was not terrible. The influence of a certain bodily serenity that was mine now at last after so much suffering seemed to rise up and flow in gently, like cooling water, upon my mind. But still there was a feeling of pain as I thought of my sister. I well knew how it would be with her. At the first she would believe that her heart was broken; for we tenderly loved each other, and were wont to be much together. I could forecast it all. As the black-robed people gathered about the newly-made, open grave, from a closed carriage not far away would issue a faint sound of suppressed but desolate weeping. Thus would my lovely sister come to see the last rite performed. And as the first spadefuls of earth were thrown into the grave with that dull, dreadful sound, her head would be bowed upon her knees, and all her attitude tell of one cruelly bruised and beaten with grief.

There was this pain, but this was all. The consciousness of approaching death brought no excitement, no anguishing alarm. For a time this thought only was with me: "If it be the will of the Lord God, what can I do?" And then, after some moments of wandering, another thought was dimly outlined in my mind: "Whatever may happen, justice will be done to me, I am sure."

I knew that the death-bed scene was at hand; that my sister, my aunt, the doctor, the nurse, perhaps the minister,—all were there about me. I even heard a whisper now and then. Once there came the sound of a closing door in a distant part of the house, and once the crowing of a cock, faint and far away.

Then, at last, what seemed a black, eddying cloud overtook me, and I floated in its darkness with shut eyes. A chill hand descended upon my brain, spreading confusion through all its intricacies. The hour had indeed come. The creeping shadow of death slowly but unfalteringly enveloped every sense, until was left no more than a vague consciousness of existence, as one last spark is left in a heap of perishing embers.

By what power does a single spark hold to life so long? It is a strange, strange thing, this lingering of the divine spark of life in a body growing cold. No, after all, it is not strange. Will not a man who has lived many years in a house halt in the doorway and look backward as he bids it farewell, even though the house be old and going to decay?

The spark may hold on for a time, but a gust of wind comes anon, rudely stirring the protecting embers, and in a twinkling it is gone. And the man who halts in the doorway does not turn back; he only looks behind him with a smile and a sigh, then walks forward, and the door is shut.

Even so now, all in a moment, the spark went out, — the door was shut.

. . . . . .

II.

"DEATH IS THE GATE OF LIFE."

COULD it be? — was the door still ajar, — the spark still alive?

Is it allowed the dead to dream? Be it a fleeting dream or no, the shadow of death seemed lifting. A faint consciousness of existence flashed dimly across my mind at intervals, and slowly strengthened. The conviction had come that I was again a living creature. Had it been death at all, then? Surely this was not death. As yet I saw nothing; but there was a feeling of exultation in the growing sense of returning life: I was alive, and friends were near, — friends who gazed intently upon my face. All was well. A long time I remained thus, a long, happy time. At last I became aware that I lay stretched upon a soft couch, and that there was unwonted vigor in all my limbs. And now a distant singing of sweet young voices seemed to penetrate my ear, and an odor like that from the blossoming of fruit-trees in spring to open my nostrils. There was only blankness before my sight, but I knew that I was not alone; I felt unmistakably the presence of — whom? Was this the threshold of eternal life, and were these beings at my side angels? I felt that they looked down upon me searchingly,

and read my soul through my face; and I became afraid, desiring them to leave me.

And it was done. Ere long I felt that they had withdrawn, and I was happy in being alone. No, not alone, for I was soon aware of another presence. Other beings were about me, and touched me with friendly hands. They, too, gazed into my face, and it seemed to me that something was drawn or rolled gently from over my eyes, after which I saw light; but my sight was not clear for some time. Who were these new friends come to perform kind offices for me, — these beings whose presence failed to excite the same uneasiness felt when their predecessors were near?

At last I attempted to open wide my eyes, and struggled to rise; and as I did so, some striking change took place. What it involved I could not tell; but certainly the chanting of the youthful voices was now faint and far away, and those dear ones whose hands had been upon me touched me now no more; and — hark! — was not that the sound of their footsteps as they drew softly away? And it seemed to me that I heard a voice, a gentle, loving voice, — or was it a mere suggestion taking form in my awakening mind? — which said, —

"Enrobe, and come to us without."

I sat up and looked about me, and knew then that all the strange, sweet harmony was dissipated, and I was alone. What wondrous experience was this? Here was I in my own room, with all its familiar objects surrounding me. It was morning, and time to rise. What had happened yesterday?

Had I not been very ill, expecting shortly to die? And now — no weakness, no suffering — all lightness and vigor? Where was my sister — and the others?

"Enrobe, and come to us without."

Had not some one roused me with those words just now? Who was "without"? My eyes fell upon a suit of clothing hanging across a chair within arm's length, and, rising, I hurriedly dressed myself, profoundly perplexed, but not alarmed. Quitting my room, I searched the whole house through, but found no one, asking myself in wonder where they could all have gone so early; for besides my sister and my aunt, there were three domestics attached to the place. It was our country house where we were spending the summer, — we three only; for I was but twenty-five, and as yet unmarried.

As I opened the front door and went out, it struck me that something had disturbed the familiar country landscape. Had the woods and fields changed places? At the gate I turned and looked back, and was then thoroughly startled. It was much like it, but unquestionably this was *not* our country house. What was this mystery? A feeling of uneasiness seized me, and my troubled thought went upward in a prayer for help. A moment later I saw a man walking in the lane, and, opening the gate, I hurried toward him. At a distance he did not appear to be greatly different from our nearest neighbor, but a closer view made clear that he was an extraordinary person. A man in the prime of

life, with handsome, shapely features and a bright golden beard, will excite only passing attention, but this man excited wonder; for, aside from these agreeable characteristics, he had what was ineffable by comparison. I mean that his face gave expression to what may be called the beauty of nobleness to a degree such as one would expect to find nowhere beneath heaven itself.

"If such a man be not sincere and good, what has this world come to?" was my instant thought.

He seemed expecting me, and, warmly grasping my hand, asked me how I did. "I am glad to see you," he said, smiling, and with a certain joyousness of expression which struck me with wonder. "I congratulate you," he added.

Clearly he mistook me for another person. "You are very kind," I said, "but I have not the honor — I do not know you."

"You will know me better later on," he answered serenely, his calm, deep eyes never swerving from my face.

What could this mean? I had been greatly charmed, but this reply made me uneasy.

"Can you tell me where I am?" I asked, with an abruptness which betrayed my anxiety.

"I can and will — presently," he answered, with deliberation; "but before I do so, let us walk over into this grove and sit down. I have much to say to you."

I looked into the man's kind eyes, glanced away, and then back to them again. Was he mad? It was profoundly saddening to think of, — to think

that such a perfect human mechanism as this had fallen into wild disorder, —

> "Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh."

What else could explain his extraordinary manner and speech?

"You are quite wrong," he said suddenly, looking very intently into my face. "There are no insane here, except those who tend downward to hell. In the true light, none but the wicked are insane, and only the good are really in their right minds."

Who was this man? I had not spoken, and yet he knew my thoughts. Was it possible that I kept no more careful watch than this over the expression of my face? Something was wrong, and I must be on my guard. Nevertheless, I felt strongly drawn to trust in this wonderful person who seemed able to read the minds of others, and when he again suggested that we enter the grove, I walked forward by his side.

"You seem to know me," I ventured. "Where did you ever see me before?"

"I have never seen you before," he replied; "but your name is Oswald Burton, is it not?"

I did not even answer yes, such was my absorbed surprise; and meanwhile we walked in among the trees. It was a grove of towering oaks, which till now I had not observed. Paved winding walks ran through it, and near the centre was a round, deep pool, the wonderfully clear and translucent waters of which welled up from beneath a submerged rock and flowed forth from the grove in a softly mur-

muring rill. Near the spring were two garden chairs, and, inviting me to be seated, my strange guide produced a silver cup and dipped up some water.

"Drink," he said; and I obeyed.

The moment that I had tasted the contents of the cup, my eyes eagerly sought those of my companion. "Do you call this water?" I asked, my face aglow. "It is as powerful as the finest wine. Why is this?"

"It is because this fountain is in perfect correspondence with the Source of wisdom, of which it is a representative," was the quiet answer. "I rejoice that you perceived its virtue; for that is a sign to me that your ears are not closed to heavenly instruction. This cup of water is an infallible test."

"You say such strange things," I exclaimed, after a moment, amazed. "Tell me, what does all this mean?"

"It means that you are now an inhabitant of the spiritual world."

I started to my feet astounded, anxious, incredulous. "Oh, how can that be?" I cried.

"You are a spirit," was the calm response. "You have just arrived from the material world — the earth — and you are now in that vast entrance-court of the spiritual world where all come immediately after death, and remain for a greater or lesser length of time, until fully prepared to enter either heaven or hell."

"It is impossible," I said, more calmly, forgetful of what had been suggested to me during the last

days of my illness. "I have always understood that a spirit, if there be such a thing at all, is a thin, vapory, sexless something which floats about in the atmosphere, while I — have I not head, body, hands, and feet? I see, hear, taste, smell, feel, — I am a *man.*"

"You are a man, certainly, in the full possession of all your faculties; nevertheless, your connection with your material body has been severed, and you now live consciously in your spiritual body, which is in all respects the exact counterpart of the other, — only it is formed from the substance of the spiritual world, and is, therefore, not material, but substantial."

"But," I insisted, "only half an hour ago I awoke from sleep in the house over there, and dressed myself just as I have done all my life."

"And was there nothing unusual connected with the awakening to-day?"

"Yes, there was. It is true that I seem to have been removed to a strange place in some unaccountable way, and this morning, before waking, I had a beautiful dream of sweet music and odors; but —"

"That was just after your resurrection," my companion interrupted. "It was the influence of the angels who were then with you. These angels were obliged to leave you after a time, for they were from the highest or inmost heaven, and you could not bear their presence. Angels from the mediate heavens then came and remained with you until your senses were fully awakened. Prepara-

tions were now made for your instruction. You were first led to think that all the surroundings of your earthly home were about you; and this was to give you courage and confidence. It is always so provided, in order that the novitiate spirit may not suffer from too great anxiety."

I sat down in my seat, and stared at the speaker in silence. A current of air was flowing through the tops of the oaks, gently shaking the leaves; the sunshine gleamed on the water of the rill; the drone of bees and the singing of birds filled my ear. No, no, it could not be! This was the *world.* I stood up again, and, striking a small stone with my toe, sent it rolling down a slight incline.

"Do you mean to tell me that that is not a stone?" I asked.

"That is a stone, but not one belonging to the material world," was the answer. "It is a part of the eternal substance of the spiritual world, from which the matter of the natural world exists as a mere outbirth or covering."

I resumed my seat. "No, it cannot be!" I said. "It is impossible!"

An expression of disappointment overspread my companion's face, and he remained silent for some moments, looking me searchingly in the eye.

"If all that I have said is not enough, the Lord may deign to convince you in another way, young man," said he at last, with what seemed to me something of sadness. "Rise, and walk down that path a little way," he continued, indicating the direction by a movement of the hand; "and as you

go, try to recall some earthly friend whom you know to be recently deceased. And then, after a while, return to me here."

Wondering what was to happen, I rose to obey, — incredulity, anxiety, awe, no doubt, written upon my face. I had scarcely gone a hundred yards when I became aware that a young man had emerged from the trees, and was walking along a path which crossed mine a few steps ahead, — a young man whom I had known for years, and who had *died* three or four months before the beginning of my illness. We saw each other at the same moment, and with a smile of recognition on his face he quickened his step. I stopped still, turning cold and sick, as he came up, calling my name aloud.

"What — what are you doing here?" I gasped.

"Don't be alarmed," he said, with a very kind smile; "there is nothing cadaverous about me, as you see."

"Did — did I not see them *bury* you more than three months ago? Or has the world gone mad?"

"Yes, you did, — that is, you saw them bury my natural body. They did not bury *me*. I was incredulous, just as you are, when I first came," he continued, after a moment; "but I was soon convinced. Ah, yes, very soon; the logic of the situation compelled it. Our weak, perishable bodies have dropped off, Burton, and we are now in the spiritual world."

I listened dumfounded, until at length he said good-by, and turned to move on.

"Don't go!" I implored, grasping his arm, and,

as he halted, began eagerly to question him; but he stopped me.

"Who am I to instruct you, when angels of heaven are glad to do so?" he asked. "I must leave you now. Perhaps we shall see each other again; I hope so. Good-by!"

I let him go, reluctantly, and my intent gaze followed after him until his figure was lost to view among the trees. Oh, it was true! It was too true! I was a spirit. Ashamed and confused, I turned to retrace my steps up the path.

My companion of the oak grove was now no longer alone, but stood in earnest conversation with two men, both of them of a similarly noble countenance and bearing. They did not appear to perceive my approach, and a short distance away I halted, fearing to interrupt them. As thus I watched them, suddenly a strange bright halo seemed to encompass their faces. Were these, then, the angels of heaven who were to instruct me?—was my agitated thought. It must be so. One of them had uttered words of instruction already, and how ungratefully I had listened! I felt unworthy to look at them, and my eyes sought the ground. For some minutes I remained thus, reflecting upon my situation, and listening to the gentle river of air flowing through the trees overhead. When at last I dared look up, the two visitors had departed, and only he who had first spoken with me remained. He now sat in one of the chairs, his calm, clear gaze resting upon me, waiting patiently.

"Tell me who you are!" I implored, having approached as near as seemed respectful.

"I am Ariel, a servant of the Lord."

A flash, as it were of exultation, of supreme joy, swept over his face as he spoke, and it was clear to me at last that he was an angel. This conviction was accompanied by deep humiliation, and I found myself kneeling before him, not knowing what to say. But he stooped quickly, and raised me, saying:

"Bend your knee to the Lord alone. He is your Friend, your Protector. He alone is infinitely good, wise, and all-merciful."

His face shone with a wonderful tenderness and light as he said this, and I seemed to myself to be relatively in shade or darkness, far removed from him. I felt troubled, uneasy. I became desirous to turn away and go to myself, but was afraid to do so. He seemed to read my thoughts, for he rested his beautiful eyes upon me expectantly, encouragingly. So was I led to speak: —

"Oh, good, kind Ariel, let me leave you! I am unworthy, — I am not fit to be with you, for you are an angel of heaven."

"You are most free to go," he said gently. "It is time for us to part. You must go forward, now, to meet your temptations. It will be the work of good spirits to lead you toward heaven, while the evil will seek to drag you into hell. According to the state of your loves or affections, which have been determined by your life in the world, will you hearken to the one or join yourself with the other. It all depends on your life in the world; for tempta-

tions here are intended only for the perfection or the completion of the regeneration of that plane in man which is opened by reformation in the world. If you love the good and true, though you may halt, and even go backward a little in temptation, you will gradually tend upward. But if you love evil, you will in time lose all recollection of what is good, and make your final home among the wicked in hell. The Lord and all the heavens yearn to save you, but cannot if you have confirmed yourself in the love of evil. Now go forth, and may the Lord be with you! Fare you well!"

He pressed my hand warmly, then turned and walked away, and I stood looking after him, oppressed by a profound sadness. Presently some sound caused me to glance in the opposite direction, and when my eyes again sought him, the angel was lost to view.

III.

"WHERE CONGREGATIONS NE'ER BREAK UP."

THERE are times when one's sins of omission and commission stand out in such bold relief before the mental view, when one's self-interest, self-absorption, self-love, are seen, as it were in light from above, to be so supremely paramount that one is startled, amazed, terrified. It is then that one perhaps reflects that the devils love themselves, and the angels love others, and, so reflecting, wonders whether, in spite of a decent, orderly life in the external, one be not a devil within.

It seemed to me, as I thought it over now, that every act of my past life had been dictated by selfish motives, and I humbly told myself that I probably deserved nothing better than a place in hell. Nevertheless, after a little I prayed that I might in time be led to shun the place of the wicked and seek the presence of the angels, and then the state of humiliation gradually left me. I began to say to myself that though in the world I had rejected my opportunities of becoming a wiser and better man, I might not be wholly to blame. The people to whom I had looked in youth for religious instruction had done little else but talk in meaningless terms about faith,

faith, faith, and I could never understand or quite believe in it. So I took hope, trusting that in spite of all this I might in the world have cultivated at least the germ of an unselfish love for the good and the true. The thing for me to do, then, was to go forward, inquire the way leading to heaven, and never stray from it, — ever setting before myself the task of purging my mind and heart of evil. It would take time, for I was surely not ready now; it was clear enough that I was not fit — if I should ever be — to live in association with such angel-men as Ariel. But who could tell? There might be others less perfect among whom I could eventually find a place.

Encouraged by such thoughts, I turned and walked out of the oak grove. The beaten path leading thence had not been followed a great way before I saw a company of some fifteen men and women walking rapidly in a direction at right angles to my own. They had already crossed my path, and seemed to be in great haste; I therefore ran forward with a shout, being eager to speak with them and make inquiries. As soon as they saw me they one and all halted, and awaited my arrival with evident curiosity. I was shortly within a few feet of them, and, having bowed and lifted my hat to the ladies, I addressed myself to a lean, grave man of middle age who appeared to be the leading spirit of the party, and who, to judge from his dress and manner, was a clergyman. He greeted me cordially, and inquired whence I came. In reply I told him that I had just entered the spiritual world, and scarcely knew which way to turn; I

was very desirous of finding the road which led to heaven, and I should be deeply grateful for any information he might be able to furnish.

"The road to heaven?" he repeated cheerfully. "We are on it now, young man, and we shall soon be there."

"Is it so near?" I asked doubtfully.

"We hope and believe that it is," was the response. "We, too, these good friends and I," he continued, "have just arrived from the world. As soon as we awoke to consciousness, we each inquired the way to heaven, and were directed to follow this road. As we went forward we encountered each other, and gradually formed our little party. And we all confidently expect soon to enter the pearly gates, for we belong to God's elect. How is it with you, young man?"

From the moment that I stood face to face with these people I was conscious of a certain intuitive dislike for them; and at these words the feeling was intensified. Without other response, I asked, —

"Are you so sure?"

"Most sure. Have we not God's promise? We have stood steadfast in the faith, and the faithful will surely find their reward. We have sanctified our souls to God; and when once sanctified by faith, there is no falling from grace. Even though the devil lead us into sin, we are safe.

"'Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me.

. . . . .

Just as I am, awaiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,'"

he quoted, with an infatuated rapture. "Faith — faith; that one grand word expresses all. Young man, I perceive that you are without faith."

"I fear I am," I replied, without humility; for I resented the liberty he had taken in thus passing judgment upon me.

For answer, he turned to his companions, and, in the loud voice of the exhorter, said, —

"Come, dear brethren and sisters, let us convert one more soul to God. Oh, thoughtless young man, turn to Jesus! 'Turn, sinner, turn.'"

Responding to this call, they one and all crowded about me, and with the greatest enthusiasm began the singing of a doleful hymn. I became very uneasy, mentally and physically; it seemed to me that my breath came with difficulty. There were not enough of them to shut out the air from me, but none the less did I begin to feel oppressed by a sort of physical suffocation. I broke from among them and stood apart.

"Pray leave me in peace!" I cried.

But still they crowded after me impetuously, singing with redoubled vigor. I turned to run, but halted as a thought struck me.

"Why waste your time?" I shouted. "You forget that you are delaying your own entry into heaven."

This arrested their attention at once. "He is right," said the clergyman, checking himself. "Let us not delay. Our starry crowns are waiting for us, — let us go forward and receive them. However, you may accompany us as far as the gate, young

man," he added. "It may be of service to your soul to see us enter the blest abode."

Then they all turned and hurried onward as before, their faces aglow with eager anticipation. They had caused me great anxiety, and I was heartily glad to be free to separate from them; but I felt prompted by strong curiosity to follow them, for a time at least, and see what became of them. The clergyman addressed several remarks to me as we thus went forward, but conversation was rendered difficult by reason of the space between us. I dreaded the thought of their closing around me again, and kept at a certain distance, in order that I might have a fair chance of escape in case of a renewal of the attack. However, I asked and received answer to this question: —

"What do you expect to do after you have entered heaven?"

"Do? What a question! We'll sing the songs of Zion, to be sure, and live in perfect bliss forevermore. You are evidently in sore need of instruction, young man. Have you never heard that heaven is the place where the just are gathered together after death to praise God, — the place where 'congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths never end'?"

"I wonder what the angel Ariel would say of these people," was my thought. "They are certainly not ready for heaven; they are deceiving themselves."

My reflections were here cut short, for we had now reached the summit of a gentle incline, and there rose before us at no great distance a high white wall

of what appeared to be glistening stone, crowned by a handsome turreted gateway. My companions shouted with exultation when they saw that only a green lawn separated them from what they doubted not was the object of their desires, and, as they fell on their knees in thanksgiving, I felt a thrill of excitement and awe. Was it really a gateway leading to the blest abodes, and had I strayed up to it, doubtful, irreverent, unprepared?

I now saw that a door in the great gate was open, and that people were coming from various directions and entering with all possible speed. This eagerness to arrive was contagious. Hardly were my companions on their knees before they were upon their feet again, and rushing forward in the confusion of extreme haste. I followed close, and saw them crowd in through the entrance, some careless of the rights of others in their hurry, and very nearly all forgetful of dignity. Meanwhile I halted without in much perplexity of mind. Observing this, the doorkeeper, a gray-bearded, non-committal sort of an old man, inquired why I hesitated.

"Why don't you come in?" he asked politely, seeming surprised at my unusual behavior.

In still greater perplexity, I then walked past him into a vast, low hall, utterly lacking in adornment, which appeared to contain about two thousand people. These were divided into groups, some of which were engaged in singing, some in praying, and some in preaching and listening thereto, the resultant confusion of sound being indescribable. Those who sang cast their eyes upward with

what may be termed an expression of extravagant beatitude, while those listening to the preachers seemed to gloat over and drink in every word, apparently heedless of the discordant conflict of sound. The preachers themselves, and those who offered prayers, seemed wrought up almost to the point of frenzy.

"What can all this mean?" was my thought. "These people are beside themselves." I repeated the question aloud to a man at my side.

"It means," was the enthusiastic answer, "that we are now in heaven, 'where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths never end.'"

At these words, I felt a sinking of the heart, and glanced hurriedly over my shoulder toward the door. The rest might remain and keep alive the present excitement to all eternity if they chose, but as for me, I wanted to move on very shortly. It might be heaven to them, but it could never be heaven to me. A few minutes later I turned and sought the entrance, and to my great astonishment found myself confronted by a solid wall; the door had apparently vanished. A prey to painful anxiety, I returned to the hall, and, finding a seat, listened to the mingled sounds of preaching, praying, and singing until it seemed to me that I was fast becoming deafened, stunned, if not mad. A deadly feeling of suffocation seized me, and, rising, I staggered along the wall, praying for deliverance from this captivity. Having thus made my way about one half the distance round the great room, all at once I saw a small door before me, and rushed through it.

I now found myself in a hall almost as large as the first, and containing quite as many people. Here there was neither preaching, praying, nor singing, but none the less great confusion of sound. Some were eating and drinking as they stood about refreshment tables, whereon was abundance of food. Some were sitting or lying upon benches, and dozing, with every appearance of extreme fatigue; but the majority were pacing restlessly back and forth, discussing the situation. The intense religious rapture of the preceding hall gave place here to evident discontent and anxiety.

After taking some refreshment at one of the tables, I felt more comfortable, and looked about me with interest. Seating myself on a bench beside an elderly woman whose face attracted me, though now overshadowed by an expression of extreme dejection, I made bold to inquire the cause of her unhappiness.

"I am unhappy," she said, in substance, "because I am shut up in this place, and am unable to find my way out. I am told that as soon as I have refreshed myself, I must return to the other hall and join in the singing and praying, and when I again need nourishment, come in here, then go back, and so on, forever. This is the life of heaven. I have done as I was told, but the longer I am here, the more horrible it all becomes. I have now been here some forty-eight hours, and forty-eight years could scarcely seem longer. My head feels ready to burst at the bare thought of listening to preaching, or of praying or singing. I may be a very wicked woman

to have such thoughts, but I feel as if I never wanted to see a preacher again as long as I live."

"Was not this your idea of heavenly happiness when you were in the natural world?" I asked.

"Yes, it was; but I have found to my cost that there is no happiness in it. It is now my idea of extreme misery. If they make me go back in there again where those people are carrying on," she continued, after a moment, "I don't know what I may do, — I feel as if I should scream and go mad. I shall die if they don't let me out," she concluded, glancing about the room in an apprehensive, shrinking way.

"They will let us out soon, I think," was my rejoinder. "I have come to the conclusion that the whole thing is a farce, permitted in order to show us how vain and foolish are our ideas of heaven."

A gleam of hope illumined the woman's weary eyes as she listened. "If they would only let me out and set me to doing something," she said wistfully; "if I could only go about my daily affairs!"

I attempted to say a few cheering words, then passed on. Some time later, while wandering about the opposite side of the apartment, I became aware of a door in the wall, which, until now, had escaped my notice. Passing through it without delay, I entered a third hall, which was also full of people. Here the greatest confusion reigned, the floor being strewn with the refuse of fruit, and odds and ends of clothing, the people dishevelled and demoralized, rudely jostling one another as they crowded hither

and thither. All signs of religious enthusiasm had disappeared, being replaced by noisy and abusive wrangling, particularly at the farther side, where a surging crowd was massed against a large, closed door, in evident expectation that it was to be opened. Edging my way in that direction, I presently found myself listening to some very vigorous cursing from those in the scramble who were apprehensive of being crowded away from positions of advantage.

"My sanctified clergyman acquaintance may say what he pleases, but there is certainly some 'falling from grace' here," was my thought.

I made efforts to keep aloof, but, in spite of them, was presently carried into the struggling throng. The press was so great that I began to be apprehensive lest the women should suffer injury, and, in endeavoring to protect one just in front of me, I discovered that she was none other than the unhappy creature with whom I had conversed in the second hall.

"They will certainly let us out shortly," I said, to encourage her.

"Perhaps we are punished in this way for imagining that we were worthy of heaven," she panted, with a bright look.

"You *will* be worthy in time, I think," was my inward reflection, while making some appropriate rejoinder.

It was probably not so long, but it seemed to me that fully an hour had passed, when the great folding-door finally parted and rolled back, framing a welcome glimpse of the green open country with-

out. The crowd poured out in a thick, turbulent stream, and scattered almost in a twinkling; some running away as if for dear life. Liberated at last, I threw myself exhausted upon a garden-bench not far away, and watched the people as they streamed through the door and hurried away in all directions. It was a strange sight.[1]

Thus occupied, I became aware after a little while that one of the keepers of the exit door stood near me, and was answering questions put to him by a young man of pleasing appearance, who evidently had just escaped from the crowd.

"What is this place? What is it intended for?" was the first question I overheard.

"It is an imaginary heaven, intended for the instruction of those who suppose that the life of heaven is a life of idleness," was the answer. "Such people flock here (and to other similar places) immediately after their resurrection, only to be made sensible that such a heaven is really a hell. After this has been sufficiently impressed on their minds, they are let out, and, though they scatter widely, each one is looked after, — each one is instructed, told what heaven really is. Some are pleased at what they hear; but many are indignant when told that a life of idleness is impossible in heaven. The former unconsciously move away in an easterly direction; but the latter take their course westward."

"Why eastward and westward?"

[1] A similar scene is described in the "True Christian Religion" (No. 788) of Emanuel Swedenborg, from whose writings is taken the conception of the future life presented in this tale.

"Because heaven is toward the east, and hell toward the west."

"Which way is east?" thought I, looking about me.

"Cannot one, then, travel to heaven merely by keeping an easterly course?" was the next question.

"No. The state of one's loves or affections determines one's course. The novitiate spirit who loves the good and the true will travel eastward truly of his own will, being so led of the Lord; but he who loves the evil and the false will insensibly gravitate westward till hell is reached."

With a mind full of perplexities, I rose and descended a gentle slope until I stood on the bank of a small stream. "I shall go back presently and ask that man to tell me what the life of heaven really is; I am too fatigued now," was my thought. Having quenched my thirst and bathed my face and hands, I sat down on rich, soft grass.

The day was almost done by the time we were set free, and now it was growing dark. I felt glad because I wanted to rest. The odor of the grass and neighboring shrubs, the chirp of a bird, the voice of the stream, all enchained my senses and bade me not return as yet. The moon rose presently, — all mellow, big, and splendid, just as I had been wont to see it on summer evenings in the world. As I sat and watched it, a cool river of air came softly about me, stirring the leaves, and I was conscious more and more of great physical content.

"Whatever may be the real life of heaven, all this is delightful, and I thank God for it," was my thought.

After a little while I had entirely forgotten my intention of returning in order to make inquiry and receive instruction, and, falling back upon the grass, soon lost all recollection in sleep.

IV.

IN A FOOL'S PARADISE.

WHEN at last I awoke it was morning, and birds were singing in the trees of the neighborhood. My slumber had been sound and refreshing, and as I rose and looked around, I became conscious of an astonishing lightness and vigor of limb. This feeling was so pronounced that I presently found myself wondering if any real fatigue would result from a tramp of a hundred miles.

"What a change from the weakness and pain of the past few weeks!" thought I. "And whence this wondrous change? The spiritual body, no doubt. How glad I am to be freed from the frail, worn-out natural body! *That* is fast mouldering to dust, no doubt, while *I* — Is it not wonderful? In the world I was wont to shrink with horror at the thought of my body rotting in the ground; but now I care no more than one cares to know that some old cast-off garment is awaiting dissolution in a dust-heap. And my sister, — my poor dear sister, — she, perhaps, is decorating the grave of this earthly garment of mine with flowers, and shedding tears to think that I am dead. Dead! How I wish she could see and understand, as I do, that they are all blind in the world! Blind — blind!"

Thus reflecting, I went down to get water from the brook, and while drinking became aware that some one was approaching. Turning, I saw a tall young man about my own age, of pleasing external appearance, standing close to me. He saluted me in a very cheery way, and his speech and manner were as friendly as possible. I felt charmed. "Here is an agreeable companion for the asking," was the instant suggestion in my mind.

He explained that he had seen me in passing, and had thought it might be worth while to accost me, as I, too, was probably a new-comer from the world.

"Which way are you bound?" I asked.

"Heavenward."

"So am I."

"Then suppose we walk on together," he proposed eagerly. "I don't think it is very far off," he added.

"On the contrary, I think it must be very far indeed."

"By no means," he rejoined confidently. "I have been reliably informed that it is only a little way ahead of us."

"An imaginary heaven, perhaps," was my answer. "You need not go far to find one of those. There is one up there on the hill. For my part, I have had quite enough of that."

"I don't mean one of those psalm-singing places," he rejoined, with a certain disdain which somehow grated on me; "I mean a beautiful paradise, — an Eden. Don't you know about the Garden of Eden, in which the primitive man lived before the Fall?

That is what heaven is, and that is where I am going, — to the Garden of Eden."

My imagination was captivated by this idea. In the world, whenever I thought of heaven, I pictured, in an obscure, dreaming way, a beautiful paradise; and now, in spite of the lesson taught by recent events, I felt strongly swayed by what my companion said. He spoke far beyond what has been quoted, and with such enthusiasm that I presently found my objections borne down, and agreed to accompany him. As we walked forward he told me that he had been called Downing in the world, and I mentioned to him my own name.

The paradise proved to be close at hand, as had been predicted. We needed only to walk up the slope, down, and then up another, to see a walled garden before us, apparently endless in extent, and of very great beauty. The interlacing tree-tops had that fresh, enchanting green of the early spring which sometimes seems too beautiful to be real, and were hung with many-colored vines and mosses such as I had never beheld. Pleased with our first glimpse, we eagerly sought the entrance, and were admitted without question. Intent on the agreeable prospect before us, it came to me only as a remote and fleeting suggestion that so easy an admittance to heaven was hardly compatible with reasonable probabilities. The garden was indeed beautiful. As far as our explorations went, it was one continuing plantation of fruit and shade trees of indefinite variety, interspersed with flower-laden lawns, and here and there a small clear lake or stream.

The fruit was so plentiful that that which had fallen carpeted the ground in places, and we saw some young people amusing themselves by making mounds of it. Selecting what we thought we should like to eat, Downing and I breakfasted, afterward looking about for entertainment.

Later in the morning we joined a company of young men and women who were playing games with much merriment upon a flowery lawn. Ranged about them were many garden-chairs occupied by middle-aged and elderly persons of both sexes, who looked on with smiles of encouragement. As we drew near, musicians began to play upon harps and flutes, and, seating ourselves, we likewise looked on with interest as the young men and maidens formed themselves for a dance. What the dance was called I did not hear; but when I recollect it I involuntarily name it the "Flower Dance of the Coquettes," inasmuch as its distinguishing feature consisted in the frequent desertion of their partners by the young women, and the selection of new ones for the nonce from the spectators. Each one of the young girls carried on her arm several light wreaths or collars of roses, and one of these was dropped over the head of the newly selected partner ere he rose to lead her through the dance, the deserted partner meanwhile being left to his own resources.

During the course of this dance, I observed with surprise that one of the chairs near me was occupied by the sanctified clergyman whom I had followed into the imaginary heaven on the previous day. I should, perhaps, not have noticed him had not one

of the coquetting young women of the dance suddenly singled him out, and without even a "by your leave," dropped a collar of roses over his head. As he stood up, smiling and blushing from self-consciousness, I overheard him exclaim, —

"I used to think that dancing was a dreadful sin; but if they do it in heaven —" The rest was lost, as he whirled away with his arm round the young girl's waist, attracting much attention by reason of the remarkable nimbleness of his feet, considering the awkward length of his legs.

One of the very prettiest of the young girls in the dance, whom I named Flora, was pleased to favor me several times; and so marked was her apparent preference that I became greatly puffed up, regarding myself as a lion. Each time that she dropped the chain of roses about my neck, I felt an added intoxication of pleasure, until at last, as I put my arm around her in the dance, there was begun a certain stirring of the breast which startled me.

"Take care, Oswald Burton, or you will be in love presently," I told myself, with a smile. "This pretty little Flora of the Coquettes is beyond question charming; but is she the sort of wife you have proposed in your mind for yourself?"

With such interesting diversion, the day was soon gone. Long after night had fallen, and after the merry maidens had retired with their guardians, Downing and I sought a place to sleep, choosing a flower-laden, grassy lawn, where sweet, delicate odors freighted the air, and perfect quiet reigned. It was here that I discovered, for the first time, a

vague feeling of discontent. A bed of roses is a very agreeable thing to sleep upon in imagination, but in reality is less comfortable than the most inexpensive of couches. My complaints, however, awoke no sympathizing echo from Downing, who expressed supreme content with everything. I therefore said no more, but lay awake a long time, reflecting upon the strangeness of the situation. With the dawning light, all troubling thoughts were left behind. At an early hour we joined the merry people, and the gayeties of the preceding day were repeated with pleasing variety. So another day passed, and another, and yet another. With recreating conversation, games, dancing, singing, feasting, the hours could not drag. There seemed no limit to the opportunities for pleasure within reach of this merry party. Than such a care-free, idyllic existence, what more could one desire?

Only — at night the troubling thoughts would come. I felt annoyed by the lights overhead, and found it difficult to keep my eyes closed. I concluded that the dusky-blue, star-spangled sky-dome was a fine thing to look upon, but distressing to sleep under. The stars seemed to accuse me, — to be continually saying: "What are you doing, Oswald Burton? Have your late experiences taught you nothing? In spite of all the instruction you have received, here you are wasting your time in folly."

Not that we always slept beneath the stars, for by the time all began to weary of grassy beds, we had moved farther into the garden, where covered

pavilions were found, and greater facilities for comfort and pleasure were offered. But now the troubled thoughts of the night pursued me through the day. The gayeties ceased to divert me as before; even the fruits, once so delicious, no longer appealed to the taste. Was this lovely paradise to prove a bitter disappointment so soon? My eyes were weary of the rich, green growth, the long, winding avenues, the flowers, the streams, the lakes. How stupid it all was! Had the rare loveliness of the great garden really faded from view, or was the change, alas, in my fickle heart only?

On the morning of the seventh day I arose in much distress of mind, but with the settled determination to move forward. This place could never satisfy me. And so it came that I bade the merry folk good-by, and left them. "I ought to separate from Downing too," was my thought; "we do not suit each other." But when he found that he could not alter my determination, he insisted on accompanying me; and as we went forward, it was manifestly his desire to lead me from the course which I wished to take. His persuasive powers were remarkable. I found that he could sway me profoundly, — compel me, almost, to see as he saw; and I became yet more uneasy at the thought of remaining with him. Once he proposed that we turn aside and join a company of romping, bold-eyed young women.

"No," I said, "I don't like their looks."

"You don't like beauty!" he exclaimed. "Come, Burton, you are jesting. What if I told you that I saw your lovely 'Flora' among them?"

This was hard to resist, but I answered, "Then she is not what I believed her to be."

The young man fixed his eyes on mine, and I felt shaken. If I had not turned away, and walked determinedly forward, I should have yielded, I am sure.

Later in the day a strange thing happened. We had stopped to rest, and I had lain down under a tree. Awaking from a light sleep, I saw Downing seated on the grass near by, gazing absently at some object beyond me. So absorbed was he in thought that the opening of my eyes did not attract his attention, although it was clear that he had mounted guard over me, as it were. At first I thought it was some one else, and could hardly believe that I saw aright. His features were the same; but his usual bright, friendly look was replaced by a dark, sinister, malevolent expression, — the most devilish I had ever beheld. Struggling to my feet, I cried out, in horror, —

"Downing, what is this — change?"

He winced, as though from a blow, and leaped to his feet, his hands trembling, his face working.

"What change?" he demanded, smiling.

At first his smile seemed a ghastly mockery, but only at first; for almost as soon as he fixed his eyes steadily upon mine his features seemed to calm, and his old expression returned to him.

"It is nothing," he said. "You have been dreaming."

"I have not been dreaming."

We eyed each other fixedly, until an uneasy consciousness of the strength of his persuasive powers

and of my own weakness presented itself. I struggled against this, however, and said, —

"I think we must part; the time has come." I would then have turned to go, but he held me by his glance.

"Oh, no! we will not part," he said.

I was powerless. I cried aloud within me for deliverance from the strange fascination which bound me to the will of this young man. And then, all at once, I was dimly conscious that some one — some one friendly — had approached me from behind, attracting Downing's attention; for he had begun to stare at some object behind or beyond me in a wild, curious way, — fear and hatred in his eyes. Suddenly his features began to writhe, and in a moment were resolved into the horrid aspect which they had worn when I first awoke. Powerless to continue the struggle, apparently, he shrank backward, and ran from view among the trees, shrieking out curses as he went.

And then I turned to look at my protector, and saw — no one. I was free, but alone. Was it, then, an angel, — an angel who had withdrawn as silently as he had come, because I could not bear his presence?

Trembling with excitement, I hurried onward, reflecting as I went upon the strangeness of my fortunes. I believed now that I understood it all. In spite of instruction received, I had allowed myself to be led into another imaginary heaven, — this time by an evil spirit masquerading under a fair guise. And an angel — an angel acting under the will of

the Lord God — had interfered to save me, breaking the power which threatened to gain a mastery and carry me away. Reverently and humbly I whispered to myself, "How good and merciful is God to one so unworthy as I!"

Then the parting words of the angel Ariel rose before the sight of my mind and accused me: —

"You must go forward now to meet your temptations. It will be the work of good spirits to lead you toward heaven, while the evil will seek to drag you into hell. According to the state of your loves or affections, which have been determined by your life in the world, will you hearken to the one or join yourself with the other."

Did not these solemn words already apply to me, pointing to a fearful conclusion? Had I not turned away from the angel Ariel, being unhappy in his presence, and joined myself to an evil one, in whose company I was more at ease?

V.

THE CITY OF NEWCOMERS.

In a short time I became aware that the paradise was approaching its limit, and now I began to see many persons who were weary of their surroundings, and whose supreme desire evidently was to be set free. Some of the more dejected had thrown themselves upon the ground, and were bewailing their fate. Entering into conversation with several of these, I was informed that they had been in the great garden not less than ten days, that long since the bare sight of the beautiful green foliage had excited disgust, and that the various fruits, once so pleasing to the eye, so delicious to the taste, were now rejected with loathing.

"There is a gate over there, presumably leading out of this detestable place," added one of them, sullenly; "but what is the use of a gate that is never opened? Much good it does us whose fate apparently is to suffer torment here until we go mad."

Hardly were these words uttered when some one started up at a distance in advance of us, shouting joyfully, "The gate! The gate! It is opening!"

In a twinkling the despairing ones lying about me leaped to their feet and tore through the thickets

and across the lawns at a break-neck speed. Every avenue became suddenly alive with hurrying people, and scarcely had the gate risen upon my view before a great throng was massed about it. Hastening forward with no lack of eagerness on my own part, I stood on the outskirts of the crowd, and passed through the gate among the last.

I had resolved to question the keeper of the gate, who was evidently an intelligent person; so while the noisy crowd scattered far and wide, I halted in the neighborhood, and after some time approached and accosted him. I found him very willing to talk, and remained more than an hour in his company, relating my experience in the pseudo-paradise, and asking many questions. He assured me that the suffering endured in these imaginary heavens was far from incompatible with the Divine Mercy; falsities of faith long cherished could rarely be seen and rejected until living experience had discovered the pain and suffering which they inevitably entailed. The man Downing was unquestionably one of those persuasive evil spirits whose life's delight is in enticing novitiates into wickedness, thus attempting to start them on a downward course. Such evil ones, not yet having lost every semblance of good, and therefore not finally imprisoned in hell, are allowed this freedom, temptations being necessary for the purification of those preparing for heaven. Some of the flower-dance coquettes were, no doubt, innocent and well disposed in the main, only requiring temptation and instruction to cure them of a tendency to harmful coquetry; but many were courtesans

at heart, and several were probably female counterparts of Downing, who were allowed thus to tempt, and, in so doing, draw out the interiorly evil ones from the good. In such manner were they made use of as *winnowers*, though lost to all good themselves.

"The interiorly good," he added, "are always glad to learn that the real life of heaven is something very different from the life of idle comfort which they had foolishly proposed for themselves."

"Tell me about the life of heaven," I asked.

And then it was explained to me how heaven is a vast kingdom of uses, every angel, from the lowest to the highest, being happily engaged in some occupation for which he is fitted, and which makes for the common good of all. These occupations are countless, being far more numerous and varied than those on earth; for heaven is not a place where nothing is done, but where everything is done, — that is to say, everything innocent and useful, — a place where regenerated or perfected men and women live and work together in ineffable happiness, ceaselessly glorifying God in their hearts indeed, but only at stated times joining in external worship, meanwhile performing daily duties as in the world, and indulging themselves in the most delightful recreations.

"To love to live in the stream of the Divine Providence, or according to Divine order, and to love and do uses to the neighbor: this is to be an angel and to be in heaven," he said finally.

"It is important," the gate-keeper added, "for well-disposed novitiate spirits to choose some occupation and learn to perform its duties sincerely,

faithfully, and justly, not from the hope of reward, but from love to God and man. So will they the more quickly prepare themselves for their final home; for use is the very life of heaven, even as idleness and self-indulgence form the very life of hell."

"How am I to choose an occupation?" I asked doubtfully. "Where shall I find it?"

"Only go forward, desiring it earnestly, and you will find what you are best fitted to do."

With this remark he rose abruptly from the bench whereon we had been seated, telling me, after a moment's hesitation, that he had received a sign from above that the time was ripe for again opening the gate. I then observed that a fresh throng of people had gathered within the enclosure, some of whom were fighting for positions of supposed advantage while others were making futile efforts to break through the gate.

I stood still and looked on as the keeper walked forward deliberately. After some little delay the great gate swung back, and the people crowded through turbulently and scattered as before. The scrambling and scuffling, the straining haste and angry babble of the captives, would ordinarily have provoked me to laughter; but I was now too absorbed in serious thought to be easily diverted. The callous crowd seemed to me typical of the callous, thoughtless world whence we had all so recently arrived.

In a very short while all those set free had dispersed, except two or three who lingered in conversation with the gate-keeper. Eager to hear all that

might be said, I approached, and, to my great surprise, found one of the party to be none other than the erstwhile sanctified clergyman whom I had twice before encountered. What he heard in answer to his inquiries was evidently displeasing, for as I drew near I heard him say in a loud, angry voice, —

"After I have struggled to keep the faith for so many years, denying myself half the pleasures of life, after I have fairly won my starry crown and earned the right to heavenly rest, now you tell me that heaven is a *workshop!*"

"I am not to blame if you are not pleased," the gate-keeper answered mildly, but with dignity. "I only speak the truth as I am instructed to do from heaven."

"I refuse to believe it!" cried the other, in wrath, adding, as he turned to move away, "I intend to continue the search till I find the heaven of my faith. If it is not to be found, then I have been cheated, and no one need talk to *me* about a God!"

The man's face was deeply repulsive as he said these bitter words. The face of the gate-keeper was in striking contrast, being dignified, mild, serene, alive with noble purpose. I felt a certain awe creep over me as I looked at him. Was he an angel? I should have asked him, when we two were left alone, if I had dared. Certainly he seemed noble enough in look and speech, and if not an angel now, would soon be one. We had some further conversation, in the course of which he told me that a populous city of new-comers was not far from us, and that if I followed a highway which he indicated, it would

require no great length of time to arrive there. With kindly expressions of good-will, he then bade me adieu, and we separated.

After half an hour's walk through an agreeable, rolling country, divided between groves and cultivated fields, I found myself on the outskirts of a large town which appeared to be similar in all respects to those cities of the natural world with which I was familiar. The streets were paved, and the houses were built as usual, some of brick, others of stone, and still others of wood. It was late in the afternoon when I arrived, and large numbers of the inhabitants were seeking recreation, some strolling in the streets and parks, some driving, others visiting places of amusement. Elderly people were seated at the windows of most houses, looking upon the sights without for entertainment. Everything wore a holiday look, and the shops and booths were doing a thriving business.

At length, weary of wandering through the streets, I entered a tavern and ordered a light meal. As I was finishing my wine, three well-dressed, agreeable-looking young men entered and seated themselves at a small table near mine. The play of expression on their faces was interesting, and I lingered, finding myself entertained by the snatches of their conversation which often reached me. One of them, and the merriest of the three, was distinguished by singularly fine features, a courteous manner, and a direct glance of the eye which seemed to guarantee truthfulness and honor; and all this was presently enhanced by the addition of the pleasing name of

Alaric Mortimer. The other two were far from unattractive externally, but I did not feel drawn to them in the same way.

After they had finished their meal, more wine and a pack of cards were brought in. It was then that, after glancing at me with a tentative nod and smile, Alaric Mortimer invited me to join the party in a game. What we played I do not recollect, but it was productive of good fellowship and amusement, and I certainly showed more skill, and entered into the game with a keener zest than ever before. Reflecting upon this, it was clear to me that all my faculties were more active and powerful since the withdrawal from the natural body.

"Suppose we go to the theatre this evening," proposed Mortimer, after we had been playing some time. "I know a place where you can hear delicious music and see some beautiful dancing. A poetic pantomime, not an ordinary ballet," he added. He glanced at his two friends, whom he called Jack and Percy, and then at me, as he spoke.

"I prefer the society drama," responded "Jack," promptly.

"Give me the classic," said "Percy." "We can see a Greek tragedy at a charming place not far from here."

"How wonderful it is," I said, "to find everything here so similar to everything in the natural world! Yet, what else should we expect to find? The truth is, men on earth only half believe in another world at best, and therefore none but the vaguest ideas in regard to it are cherished."

Here I observed that Mortimer looked at me good-humoredly and appreciatively, but that the faces of his two friends wore an expression of surprise and disdain that was not encouraging. However, I made bold to add, —

"I wonder if dramas are enacted in heaven also."

"Alaric, he 's a man after your own heart!" cried "Jack," convulsed. "I beg pardon, but I must laugh. 'Heaven!' It seems so absurd nowadays," he added, recovering himself, — "this babble about the figment of the imagination called 'heaven.'"

"Exploding old wives' fables was ever a fruitless work," laughed "Percy."

Meanwhile I stared at them in a not altogether friendly way. That was their position, then; I did not envy them.

"It is your play," added the last speaker, with a certain impatience, looking at me.

I threw down a card at random, and said no more. We hurried through the game, and when it was finished I rose as if to move away. Alaric Mortimer rose too.

"*I'll* talk with you about heaven," he said, with a certain charm of eagerness which captivated me.

Involuntarily we moved our chairs apart, the other two settling themselves to begin a new game.

"Do you know," my companion began earnestly, "I saw an *angel* the other day, — or, that is to say, a beautiful and glorious woman who told me that she had gone through her period of preparation, and would soon enter heaven as an angel. And that woman was my own dear mother, who died six years

before I did. I told Jack and Percy about it; but they only laughed, and said I had been dreaming."

"Let us sit down," I said.

"But it was no dream. I was never so wide awake in all my life. And, oh! she spoke such wise, loving words, and told me so much that I wanted to know. And, by the way, she said she had been told that there were dramas and all kinds of delightful amusements in heaven. She said the angels performed their daily duties in the morning, and in the afternoon and evening sought recreation in social intercourse, driving, walking, and visiting places of amusement such as dramas, concerts, and the like. She said, however, that nothing bad was represented in heavenly dramas."

"It is easy to see how that must be so," I said, "but not easy to understand how any strong effect could be produced, — in fact, how there could be anything of a drama at all, if the characters were all good."

"A beautiful and harmonious unfolding, like the opening of a flower, perhaps," said Alaric. "I am glad to make your acquaintance," he went on to say, presently. "I can't talk about such things with Jack and Percy, — they always laugh at me. Do you know, those fellows will actually argue against the possibility of a life after death, and try to prove that we are still in the natural world."

"I don't know how it is with you," I said, after an exclamation of astonishment, "but I should n't think it wise to have much to do with such people. What insanity!"

"They have always been warm friends of mine," was the answer, with a doubtful expression. "Except when we begin to speak of heaven and such things, they are the most agreeable of men, and I — really it is hard to see how I could give them up."

"Some day it will be found that they are less agreeable than you think, perhaps," was my silent reflection. "A man cannot travel toward heaven in the company of atheists. The deep shadow in which they grope will in time obscure all the light from heaven which illumines his mind."

However, when later the proposal that the party spend the evening at the theatre was renewed, I consented to go, and we all went out together. The society drama was chosen. The play proved to be profoundly interesting, and was exceedingly well acted, but left a far from agreeable impression. I was ever wont to feel cast down after seeing one of those contemporary dramas which depict the seduction of a young wife away from her husband, or *vice versa.* Such a picture is a picture of hell.

Shortly after the performance we all returned, and lodged at the same tavern.

VI.

STRANGE ADVENTURES.

THE following day was Sunday, and at the usual hour of the morning church bells were heard ringing. Rather to my surprise, when Alaric and I spoke of attending, the other two young men proposed to accompany us.

"Oh, we only go for amusement," laughed Percy, in explanation. "The fashionable modern church is nothing but another form of the theatre, and all the world attends merely for the sake of diversion, — except, of course, a few among the simple-minded and uncultured."

Peace-loving Alaric here forestalled a sharp retort from me by changing the subject. We went into the street, and, after a walk of a few squares, entered a large handsome brick church which was filled to overflowing with the well-dressed higher classes. The discourse was not materially different from what may be listened to almost any Sunday in a fashionable church of the natural world. The minister's aim seemed not to be to instruct — to lead his hearers by truth to the good of life, — but to entertain, to amuse, and to beget a comfortable self-satisfaction. He talked of the great and glorious things which men had done, burning immeasur-

able incense before the altar of humanity, but wasted no word on the corrupt and evil loves which this great humanity hugs to its heart, and from which it must turn away its face before it can become heavenly.

At last I arose, indignant, and left the church, Alaric accompanying me, much to the amusement of his two friends.

"Here we all are in this world of spirits," I began. "Heaven is on the one hand and hell on the other, and the momentous problem at our doors of emancipating ourselves from the evils still enslaving us, so to make ready for our final home; and yet that man will stand up in that pulpit and talk about steam-engines, printing presses, and works of art!"

"Perhaps he does n't know any better."

"He certainly *must* know better. Ariel, the angel who talked with me after my resurrection, said that every one who entered the spiritual world was instructed, told where he was, and of the preparatory experience through which he must pass. Any ignorance, therefore, is wilful."

"It would seem, then," said Alaric, "that such people as this preacher and those who listen to him on account of the callous state in which they have confirmed themselves, soon forget what they have been taught and return to the habits of thought which were theirs in the natural world."

"Undoubtedly," I rejoined, adding: "The case of such seems hopeless, for, if they refuse to think about their evils or to try to shun them, they will of course remain enslaved by them."

During our conversation we had been strolling through the streets, and now found ourselves in front of a large stone church very similar outwardly to the other. Curiosity prompted us to look in, and I was immediately struck by something familiar in the face of the officiating minister. Another searching glance, and then I knew that there could be no mistake; it was the Rev. Sebastian Boniface who had pastoral charge of the church in the neighborhood of my country house in the natural world, and who had died some few months before my last illness. I had not known him intimately, but had highly respected him for his sterling integrity, convincing proofs of which having come to my knowledge more than once.

"Let us go in here; I know this preacher," I said.

We noticed as we entered that people of all classes were crowded into the building, evidently having gathered there, for the most part, merely for entertainment. In the rear pews were seated a disrespectful rabble, many of whom commented freely on all that took place, speaking in loud whispers punctuated by subdued laughter. Those nearer the front were more orderly in their deportment, and some seemed deeply interested in what they heard from the pulpit. As we took our seats, the minister was saying: —

"After the first shock of surprise those newly arrived in the spiritual world are too apt to forget where they are, — too apt to sink back into the old earthly habits of thinking and acting, and become

careless of the work before them. Good friends, we have not yet reached the final home, which is fixed and unalterable. This first stage of our eternal life is only a transient one. We are here to prepare to enter heaven on the one hand, or hell on the other. Let us then be up and doing. To those whose life in the world has been such that it is now impossible for them to love the things of heaven (and therefore to enter through its gates) I say nothing, for they are past teaching. But let me urge the well-disposed to turn away their eyes and minds from much that they see and hear in this city. Let me most earnestly recommend them to strive every day and hour to order their steps according to the principles of decorum, honor, and truth; not merely in act, but in thought and intention. We have all been informed in one way or another that heaven is not a place of idleness, and it is equally clear that in this intermediate world of spirits it behooves those who wish to be in order to do a great deal more than wander from place to place in search of amusement, or even of the road to heaven. Let us remember that only by right thinking and right doing are our feet made inwardly to walk in the heavenly path, and not until we have conquered the inherent tendency to go astray are our eyes opened to see the external pathway leading upward. I counsel all who inwardly have turned their faces heavenward to lose no time in securing that employment for which they are best fitted, and in making it the aim of their daily existence to do the duties of their office sincerely, faithfully, and justly, — from

no hope of reward, but from a disinterested and genuine love of the good and the true. As you learn to do this, good friends, so will you place yourselves in the stream of the Divine Providence which flows heavenward."

After a few additional words the minister bowed his head in token that he had finished. It was then — just as he was uttering the word "Amen" — that a shameful thing happened. Suddenly there were shouts of derision from the rear of the auditorium, and a shower of pebbles was thrown at the minister, some of which fell upon his bowed head and upon the open Book before him, while above the uproar were distinguished such cries as "Shut him up!" "Put him out!" "He wants to send us to a workshop!" "He lies — lies!"

With head erect, and with a pale but unmoved face, the outraged minister looked fearlessly at the disturbers. The scene that followed is indescribable. The whole house rose to its feet, some joining in the shouts of dissatisfaction, others attempting to silence these by crying "Shame!" and all adding to the tumult. It was at once clear that violent hands would be laid on an innocent man if he were not protected, and some began to crowd toward the pulpit, among whom were Alaric and I. In this way those who sympathized with the minister and those bent on malicious mischief were presently more or less distinctly outlined.

What the end would have been but for unexpected interference is matter for conjecture only. Just as a wholesale collision seemed imminent, there

suddenly appeared between the two opposing bodies three tall, erect, white-robed men with whips in their hands. Who they were or whence they came no one seemed to know, but their mission was at once proclaimed. Without a word, they turned on the disorderly element, and, vigorously employing their whips, drove all before them until the church was cleared. Something in their manner seemed to terrify the disturbers, no man of whom attempted the least resistance.

Following at a respectful distance in the footsteps of the three strange men, Alaric and I saw the disturbers driven to the last man into the street. And this was not all. Singling out five of those who had taken the lead in the outbreak, — those probably who had thrown the stones, — the white-robed guardians of the peace bound their hands with cords, and led them away captive. I saw them all disappear around the corner of the street, and supposed that the five offenders would presently be lodged in some neighboring jail; but in a few minutes the curious populace, which crowded after them, came straggling back, and reported that after turning the corner captors and captives had alike disappeared from view. They had entered no house door nor garden gate, but in the open highway and in full view of the crowd had suddenly ceased to be visible. Alaric and I looked at each other in blank surprise. Re-entering the church, we sought speech with Mr. Boniface, the minister, who evidently had received no hurt, and who, it was gratifying to find, recognized me with manifest pleasure.

"Who were those three strange men?" we asked, almost without preliminary.

"Servants of the Lord, most assuredly," was the answer.

"Do you know them? — Did you expect them?"

"No; their coming was as great a surprise to me as to you."

"What have they done with those — those wretches?" I asked.

"That we cannot tell with certainty, but we may be sure that they have removed them to some prison, probably a temporary one on the confines of hell, after which will come hell itself. I have observed that the punishment which falls upon law-breakers here is immediate and decisive."

"I don't understand their sudden disappearance," said Alaric.

"When they disappeared from our eyes," rejoined the minister, "they appeared before the eyes of those belonging to the region whither they are bound, and who are of a similar character. Meanwhile they seemed to themselves to take a journey, but really there are no distances in the spiritual world, although the appearance is otherwise, and all progressions are nothing but changes of state. This is why, in the heavens, only those live together who are in similar affection and thought, and why one person immediately becomes visible to another if only his presence is intensely desired. I have heard this from angels. You will understand it only obscurely at first, but more clearly later on."

It was now time to leave the church in order that

it might be closed, and we reluctantly bade the minister good-day. He cordially invited us to visit him at our leisure in what he smilingly spoke of as his temporary home, which was not far away, and we parted after a warm grasp of the hand.

"What a wonderful and glorious gift is life, eternal life," I said, as we descended into the street.

Alaric's eyes wandered over the rustling tree-tops of a park stretching away to the left of us as he responded, with a soft, low sigh: —

"Ah, yes! But poor Jack and Percy, — they have this gift, and refuse to believe in it."

VII.

THE COLLEGE OF THE "WISE."

I WAS profoundly impressed with the suggestion relative to the importance of seeking some occupation. What Mr. Boniface said in his pulpit served to confirm and strengthen me in an affirmative attitude toward the paradise exit-gatekeeper's teaching on the same subject. I *did* have the desire to do something more than wander about the world of spirits in search of information and adventure, but what should or could I do? This was a perplexing question. In the natural world I had as yet entered into no settled occupation, having barely finished my collegiate course and enjoyed a year of travel when I was attacked by the illness which ended in my death. The possession of ample means was one cause of this unusual delay in choosing a profession. A certain fickleness of purpose — a wandering of my inclinations from one avenue to another, until I had run the gamut of the learned professions — might be traced in part to the same source. It was one of the pronounced weaknesses of my character that I imagined myself possessed of universal talent, a weakness arising less from inborn conceit, perhaps, than the circumstances attending my bringing up. The daily association with the members of a united

family, who indiscreetly overrated my talents, was more agreeable than wholesome. Did I recite, argue, paint, write, make music, or what not, this blundering family affection filled up all the broken places in my crude performances and pronounced them wonderful.

Behold me, then, at the age of twenty setting before myself the uninvited and delicate task of teaching the art of composition to a young writer of a good deal of experience and some real promise, thus becoming a bore, and spoiling a friendship which had promised to be helpful on both sides. This experience, which, to be quite frank, was only one of a long line of follies, instead of opening my eyes, caused me to formulate some serious reflections upon the ingratitude of mankind. So I went on, theorizing and expounding, imagining that I might do equally well in any one of a dozen professions if only I took the pains to pass through a certain amount of preparatory drudgery. One's character may seem contemptible enough if one will but turn one's heart inside out, and read the record of folly and sin. How rarely do we this! How rarely do we submit to the pain of being perfectly frank even with ourselves!

But by the time I had reached the age of twenty-five this weakness had begun to mend, or to take another form, and it gradually became clear to me that my strongest inclination was in the direction toward which a great love of scholarship pointed, — teaching. I therefore turned my thoughts toward an eventual professorship in some college, although

my fortune placed such a course easily without the bounds of necessity.

If the difficulties were such in the natural world, they were, or seemed, doubly complicated here. Whither did my ruling inclination now tend? Toward teaching still, for upon reflection I realized that there had been no change. But how was I to teach here, since my position was constantly that of an inquirer, a learner? But suppose I were to go through a long and thorough course of training, — what then? If I could but be prepared to go about welcoming and instructing the newly arrived from the world, as did the angel Ariel, — ah! In the instant of the shaping of this thought it was all clear to me, as though in a sudden and vivid lightning flash from on high, — that which engaged my love, and in the pursuance of which I should be glad to spend my life.

How seek it out? After all, the difficulties might not be so great. As an initial step, I would inquire the way to some institution of learning, — there must be such places, — and enroll myself among the students. This institution would of course be directly or indirectly under angelic auspices, and the instruction sound and efficacious. Confiding my aspirations to Alaric, I felt encouraged to hear that his experience had not been free from perplexities. The love of his life was art, and although he had found his way to a school soon after his arrival from the world, he had been greatly tormented there, nothing being tolerated but ultra-realism. He had not long since broken away and sought out another school of

art, where he was more free to indulge his taste for the ideal. In the course of our talk he mentioned that not far from the city of Newcomers was a famous institution of learning called the College of the Wise, where were congregated many professors from well-known schools in Europe. His two friends were attending lectures there. He was doubtful whether I should like the so-called "rationalism," which was all-pervading, and which, to his view, seemed very far from rational; but investigation could do no harm. Both his friends, he understood, were to speak at a meeting of the college gymnasium the following evening; and he proposed that we walk out in the afternoon, see the college, dine at a students' restaurant, and attend the evening meeting. I should then be able to decide whether to have my name enrolled.

Quite eager for the adventure, I urged an early start the next afternoon. The walk was made interesting by conversation with Alaric, and it seemed but a short time after leaving the city behind us when the college rose to view, — a large, rambling, pretentious structure of sandstone in a low sandy valley which was little short of a desert. I was struck with astonishment to observe that no lake or stream reflected back the rays of the sun in all that region. At a nearer view it was seen that there was an attempt at ornamental grounds, but where noble branching trees should have been there were only stunted shrubs.

"What made them choose this desolate site?" I asked.

"It was chosen for them, perhaps," was the rejoinder, the lightness of Alaric's smile tempered by a certain gravity of the eye.

As we paused before the main entrance, examining the modest inscription above it,

THE COLLEGE OF THE WISE,

a servant appeared and invited us to follow him through a long, bare hall to a reception room, where we were requested to be seated and await the coming of one of the college officials. Glancing around the room, our attention was attracted, not to the portraits of the college dignitaries, but to a number of inscriptions on the walls in large black letters. Among them I recall this: —

"*Creeds are a curse if used as anchors to arrest progress.*"

And this: —

"*The future life is purely an unverifiable assumption of a dogmatic theology.*"

And this: —

"*The credulity of the vulgar is the great egg from which are hatched the crowding impostors called priests.*"

Our observations upon these inscriptions were interrupted by the entrance of the expected college official, who saluted us with great cordiality. He was a tall, pale, scholarly looking man, handsome enough, though I could not admire the expression of his eye, and had in a marked degree that suavity of manner which is wont to captivate the unthinking. I told him what had brought us there, and

listened to a panegyric on the distinguished college to which he was proud to belong, and the famed professors who contributed to its greatness. He assured me that I had done well to come to them, as I would realize erelong, and proposed to show us over the building without delay. But as he rose, I detained him, referring to the inscriptions on the walls.

"I have been puzzling over these," I said. "I can find no fault with the first, provided you mean *false* creeds and *true* progress; and I can well imagine a great many well-disposed people sympathizing in some degree with the caustic sentiment of the last, since it is quite probable that a great many 'priests' in the world at this day are hypocrites or impostors. But your inscription relative to the 'future life' I have read with absolute astonishment. What can you mean by it?"

"Exactly what the words express."

Alaric and I exchanged glances.

"But" — after a pause — "how can you say that the 'future life' is a pure assumption, when both you and I are now *living it*, having passed by death from the natural to the spiritual world?"

The official smiled indulgently, as a mature man smiles when listening to some wild boyish nonsense. "I see that those pitiable lunatics have been talking to you," he said regretfully. "They will do it if you permit them. They even came to me — to *me* — with their puerile babble, but that was long ago."

There followed a dead silence.

"Have you no recollection of the hour following your resurrection?" asked Alaric, suddenly.

"Stuff! Why waste our time in the discussion of such follies? However, these lunatics — if we must speak of them — came and talked to me once just after I awoke from a long nap. I very soon sent them about their business."

"Then you really believe that you are still in the natural world? It seems incredible," I said.

"Certainly. There is no other world."

"You don't mean to say," began Alaric, a little impatiently, "that you believe yourself to be in the identical college and city of Europe or America in which you formerly —"

"No, — no, I can't say that, though some of us *do* claim that. There unquestionably has been some change or other which a few of us recognize, and which we are unable as yet fully to explain. We have certainly been removed from our former homes to some similar yet different place *in the same world;* but just how this was done, and just exactly where we are now, — these are the obscure points. We have often discussed it. Some think we were drugged. Not one of us will for a moment admit that there was a supernatural agency. One of our professors, an exceedingly learned man, is now engaged in a profound investigation of the mystery, and confidently expects to reach a complete solution by purely scientific methods."

After this there was really nothing more to be said. Such insanity was unanswerable. We signified by our manner that we were ready to go forward and see the remainder of the building.

We were then conducted into a large hall, one wall

of which was built of glass. Very little light seemed to be transmitted, however, which might explain why the several large telescopes arranged at equal intervals extended through round apertures into the open air. The other walls were in great part painted black, and were now covered with chalk sketches showing the relative positions of the different constellations.

"This is our department devoted to astronomical observation," explained our guide, "and we can show a gratifying advance in the science. The chief of our learned astronomers has already discovered two new planets, and located several new fixed stars. He is now superintending the construction of an enormous telescope with which he expects to observe the movements of the nearest planets so minutely as to be enabled to deduce therefrom the principles governing, not only aerial navigation, but navigation through space itself. The practical application of these principles he confidently hopes will result in a flying-machine which will insure every bold adventurer a visit to the planets, and indeed the remotest solar system. This of course will make the indefatigable professor and our college immortal, besides being an incalculable gain for science."

Alaric and I must have shown that in our opinion "the indefatigable professor and our college" would long for such immortality in vain; but we were discreetly silent, and presently followed our guide into a second hall or recitation room, the walls of which were also painted black for the use of chalk, and in one end of which were arranged some drooping pot

plants. Here we encountered an acting professor, who, we were told, was one of the most renowned of "living" botanists. As we entered he was finishing a drawing on the wall behind his rostrum, facing the rows of empty seats.

"I am preparing for to-morrow's lecture," he said, when we had been presented to him.

He had drawn a diagram showing the ascent (and relative positions) of the higher life-forms from the lower, vegetable and animal. At the bottom came protoplasm, that curious "semi-fluid, sticky material, full of numberless minute granules in ceaseless and rapid motion," which we were told to regard as the *first* or basis of all animal and plant life. The drawing was designed to show how from this inexplicable all-creating substance sprang first in order in the vegetable kingdom lichens, and, as gradually more perfect forms, mosses, liverworts, ferns, palms, grasses, pines, larches, oaks, nettles, roses, apples, the olive convolvulus, and in the highest group composites, as the daisy and dahlia. The part of the diagram devoted to the animal kingdom gave, after protoplasm, protozoa, sponges, coral builders, jelly-fish, star-fish, sea-squirts, ganoid fish, cuttle-fish, oysters, bony fish, insects, amphibia, reptiles, birds, placentals, insect feeders, as rodents, lemurs, bats; after which came beasts of prey, whales, elephants, tailed monkeys, tailless apes, man.

"But what is the *origin* of this wonderful all-creating protoplasm?" asked Alaric, respectfully, after we had listened to the professor for some time.

"I told you that it was the first principle. How

can we go beyond the beginning? If it be first, it is of course its own origin." This with some slight sign of irritation.

"And you do not think," pursued Alaric, quietly, "that there can be anything whatever beyond? Has it never seemed to you reasonable to suppose that this first natural form of life draws its soul or essence from a spiritual form, which in turn exists and draws life from the very First, — the uncreate and eternal God?"

"Bah!"

"May I ask you a question?" I interjected here.

"You may," replied the professor, haughtily.

"This all-creating protoplasm, does it think and love?"

"'Think and love?' Certainly not!"

"If you grant, then, that man is a being who thinks and loves, as you must, do you not see that the *creature* is superior to the *creator*, which is impossible? What stream can rise above its source?"

The professor had become pale with anger as he listened. By way of reply, he now turned to our guide, and in a shaken voice demanded: "Who are these foolish and presumptuous young men? Take them away before I forget myself."

Then, with a sneer, as he returned to his diagram: "Talk to *me* of a God who can oversee the universe when I know that the distance to the nearest of the millions of fixed stars is so vast that three years are required for the light to reach us travelling at the rate of one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second!"

The guide wisely hurried us away, and presently introduced us into a third hall or class-room devoted to the science of comparative anatomy. Ranged in order, we found here several human skeletons and the stuffed skins and skeletons of a great variety of animals; not the remains of dead men and beasts, but, as was afterward clear to me, the product of fantasy. At one end of the room the professor in charge was making chalk drawings on the black wall, preparatory to his coming lecture, which he informed us was to be on the subject of evolution. He had drawn a magnified skeleton of a bat, and called upon us to note how strangely similar to the human skeleton it was — barring the wings; and even the wings, with the tips cut off, were by no means unlike the human arm-bones. There were also other sketches showing the likeness between the skeletons of early reptiles and birds.

"These wonderful facts of science tell their own story," he said to us, with a satisfied air.

I should have liked to ask if his interpretation of these facts did not tell its own story too, but our late experience was not forgotten, and I said nothing.

"Let us now visit our hall of mythological curiosities," proposed the guide later on. "It is the most interesting of all to me, though you may be more pleased with the library."

He led us forward into a fourth hall, the walls of which were covered with deep shelves whereon were arranged in groups a great number of white statues.

"Thanks to the untiring energy of our learned

mythologists and clever sculptors," he began, with a proud flourish of the hand, "we have here a unique and most valuable collection, — we have here a statue to represent each god with all his attributes in every system which has existed from the dawn of history. Let me point out the more important groups. Here we have the Sumero-Akkadian, the Assyrian, the Babylonian; here the Egyptian, here the Phœnician and the Carthaginian. In this prominent group we find the twelve great gods of Greece, and all the minor deities and demi-gods, even down to the graces, river gods, naiads, and dryads. Here is the interesting Roman collection, and the meagre remains of the ancient Etruscan. Over here are the Hindoo, Chinese, and Tartar, and here the Persian. These are the ancient German and Scandinavian, and these the gods of ancient Gaul and Britain. Now we come to the Mexican and Peruvian."

We had followed our guide as he pointed out the more prominent groups, thoughtlessly intent upon each collection and little dreaming what was to come. We were now near the bottom of the hall. All at once the guide raised his hand with a flourish, —

"And here," he said, "we have the single Jewish and the three Christian — "

I drew in a quick breath and lowered my eyes as his meaning flashed upon me, holding myself thus for a moment as it were in pulseless suspense. Then, ere they were finished, the man's words were arrested by an imperious command: —

"Silence!"

I looked up at Alaric, for it was he who had spoken. His face, was averted and pale to the lips. He turned, and our eyes met; then instantly we started toward the door in haste. A few moments later we halted in the open air, and, involuntarily, our hands met in a warm trembling clasp.

"My friend, — my friend," I half whispered, and from very horror was silent. "This must be hell itself," I added, at last.

"Hell inwardly if not outwardly," was the response.

Then we became aware that the guide had followed us and was approaching.

"I beg a thousand pardons," he began with his most graceful manner, and with insufferable assurance. "I was too premature. But really I could hardly have expected this from two such promising young men, especially nowadays, when it is no longer in good taste to speak seriously of religion in intelligent society. It is wonderful, truly wonderful, what a hold that old Biblical fable has on the human race, — that is, on the simple-minded, not on the enlightened. My dear young friends, you don't intend to be classed among the simple-minded, do you?"

We looked at the man with loathing written on our faces, as he paused.

"You had better leave us," Alaric gave warning in a shaken voice.

The guide's suavity of manner slowly disappeared, and, with a threatening look, he began a terribly profane speech. But the speech was not ended; the

limit of sufferance had been overpassed. Alaric's right arm suddenly shot out straight from the shoulder, and a badly shaken man lay prostrate on the ground behind us, as we turned and walked rapidly away.

VIII.

THE TAILLESS APE.

We took a long walk before dining at the students' restaurant as proposed. I urged an immediate return to Newcomers, but Alaric reminded me that his two friends were to speak at a meeting of the college gymnasium that evening, and insisted on remaining at least a few hours longer.

"I can't make up my mind to re-enter that building," I said. "We ought to shun such a place. It is like playing with fire."

"It would indeed be so if we were not fixed in our belief," was the answer, "but, as it is, I think it will be a useful —"

"But how do we know what unheard of profanation they may thrust upon us?"

"At the first indication of any such thing we can come away. I *must* go this once," Alaric added, very earnestly, "for the sake of my friends. I still have hope that they may be saved."

It was quite dark when we emerged from the restaurant. We found a seat upon a low, flat rock, which seemed strangely out of place in all that sand, and there discussed the matter. Our resting-place was some two hundred yards in front of the main college building, which lifted itself against the dusky

horizon in bulky, indistinct outlines. The light in the many windows weighed upon my fancy, and the building gradually assumed the appearance of a vast crouching monster, whose hundred red, starting eyes watched us gloatingly.

However, an hour later, when the bell announcing the opening of the gymnasium was heard, I agreed to follow my companion. We quietly found our way into the hall, and seated ourselves in an inconspicuous position near the door. The gymnasium was a circular auditorium of considerable size, its tiers of seats being arranged on an incline which sloped gradually down to a central floor or platform, where there was a small elevated rostrum provided with a reading-desk for the speaker. The professors sat on the platform, the students in the circus, and both the one and the other wore thin black robes and caps, being distinguished, therefore, only by their positions. The head-master, or president, wore the same costume, but was conspicuous among his colleagues in an elevated chair facing the speaker. I observed that the man whom Alaric had knocked down sat among the professors, and that he scanned the faces of the entering students as if on the look-out for us. When all had gathered, the head-master rose, and, after a graceful introduction, mentioned the subject for the evening.

"For convenience," he said, "we have divided the subject into three parts, and we are to listen to three separate papers or addresses. The subject, with its subdivisions, is as follows: —

"Is man anything more than a perfected beast?

"(1) If not, how do we explain his superstitions,—his belief in a soul and a future life?

"(2) What is the origin of myth, and in what relation do the Jewish and Christian religions stand to those preceding them?

"(3) How is our proposition to be answered from the standpoint of comparative anatomy?

"The first and second branches of the subject will be presented by two brilliant representatives of our senior class of students. The third will be felicitously handled by our distinguished colleague, whose anatomical research has made him famous in two hemispheres, and whose name I therefore need not mention."

With this flourish the head-master resumed his seat, and a student (whom I recognized as Alaric's friend Jack) rose and approached the reading-desk. Spreading his thesis out before him, he spoke in substance as follows:—

"If man be nothing more than a perfected beast, how do we explain his superstitions,—his belief in a soul and a future life? We are all agreed that man is the very flower of creation,—a perfected form of life with which Nature was able to crown her labors only after a struggle of millions of years. If this highest work of nature, then, be so super-eminent as to fineness and complexity of physical texture, it must in a corresponding degree be endowed with superior mental quality; given the finer body, we have as a consequence the finer brain. Let us take this primitive man, with his superior development of body and brain, and consider him in relation to

his surroundings. In him the brain of the ancestral beast has been amazingly enlarged, — has, by slow transformation, been endowed with the new and wonderful faculties of imagination and reason, so that, although he at first lives in a similar manner to his four-footed ancestors, as do the lower savages at the present day, we have in him a creature capable of receiving and reflecting upon impressions.

"His thinking, however, is for ages of little avail, for he is untaught, self-dependent, and the whole world is to him as it were a sealed book. Nevertheless, he slowly gathers a stock of ideas and cherishes them with growing appreciation. Lying down upon the ground at night to sleep, his imaginative faculty remains awake; he dreams that he wanders far away, and passes through many adventures. In the morning he speaks of these adventures to his friends *as realities.* In respouse, they laugh; they tell him that he lay asleep all night beside his fire under the oak; such and such a one was awake and can testify that he did not stir. Still, the impression of his nocturnal adventures is too vivid to be lightly surrendered; and so, as the attempt is made to explain this mystery, gradually is evolved the belief in *another self* or *soul,* which separates itself and walks abroad at will, leaving the body asleep on the ground.

"The primitive man has ere this learned by sad experience that he and all his fellows must one day die. He sees the life become extinct in the body of his friend; the light of the eye fades out, the limbs grow stiff, the whole man rots and becomes as nothing. Nevertheless, when he falls asleep and dreams,

or his *other self* goes forth, the dead friend is en countered as large as life, is seen to laugh, to speak, to eat: after all, then, the dead friend is still alive. So is gradually evolved the idea and settled belief in a *future life*. This idea grows, and is modified as it is handed down through the ages, as all stories grow when repeated from mouth to mouth, until we arrive at the present religious belief which still holds among the simple. Thus, sir, do I explain how man, though evolved from and now the top and crown of brute creation, came to have a belief in a soul, or other self, and a future life."

As he retired to his seat the speaker received a smile of warm approval from the head-master, and was roundly applauded by a large majority of the students. Quiet restored, the second branch of the subject was read, and a second student, whom I recognized as Alaric's other friend, rose and walked forward to the desk. His paper was substantially as follows: —

"What is the origin of myth, and in what relation do the Jewish and Christian religions stand to those preceding them? The foregoing essay gives in general an answer to the first question, What is the origin of myth? — for the first crude myths, the parent stock of the vast systems which followed, could only have come to life in the virgin mind of the primitive man at the same time with and in a similar manner to his idea of another self, or soul, and a future life.

"Picture the primitive man still in the forest homes of his by no means remote ancestor, the tailless ape. Picture him with his small equipment of

knowledge and experience confronted by the startling phenomena of nature. When his newly wakened mind observes the rising and setting of the sun and moon, the gathering of black, threatening clouds, the fall of the rain, the voice of the wind, the glare of the lightning, the roar of the thunder, how is he to give these natural forces their true value and place in nature's economy, he whose mind is stored only with new and vague impressions? He cannot. Yet he is not idle. He is afraid, he trembles, he *deifies.* Almost all mythologies catalogue the sun and moon among the gods, and we have only to go back as far as the Greeks to find the lightning regarded as a terrible bird of fire.

"What need have we of further inquiry? The origin of myth is perfectly clear. How, from its first crude beginnings, myth was amplified into the extensive religious systems which have succeeded one another from the dawn of history to the present is equally plain. The history of this progression is but the history of the gradual enlargement of man's stock of ideas and his consequently improved reasoning capacity. What in one age is accepted with full faith gradually comes to be regarded in a succeeding age as absurd, and is therefore abandoned. The continual elimination wrought by criticism goes on until we arrive at the Christian religion, which is more simple and more rational than any preceding system. A marked feature in this gradual modification is the steady decrease in the number of gods. The five to eight hundred Egyptian, and the four hundred gods in the Assyrian and Babylonian sys-

tems, become one in the Jewish. The Christians, however, have broken the rule, and seem to tend backward by acknowledging three.

"We have spoken of the Christian religion as the most rational and simple of all preceding systems, but, as viewed in the light of reason, what a tissue of absurdities it is! Could there be a more complete surrender of the barest rudiments of rational thought than the conception of three divinities, each one of which is an all-powerful God? The preceding makers of mythology showed far more wisdom, for hitherto there has usually been one chief god to whom all the others were subservient. In this respect the Jews discover superior judgment to the Christians. These two latest mythologies or religions, which we are asked to believe in with shut eyes, have much in them to remind us of the crude early myths from which they are descended, and, what is still more damaging, have much which tends to place them on a level with the barbarous systems of savages. For example, all apart from the graver side, the Orangoo negroes say it is a sin to spit on the earth, and Christians say it is a sin to play at cards; the Kamtchatdales say it is a sin to tread in the tracks of a bear, and Christians say it is a sin to dance.

"In view of the grand, impartial, resistless sweep of time and work of nature, of the colossal universe, of the unanswerable and undying facts of science, how petty and presumptuous appear these religious systems, with their gods and devils, their rewards and punishments! Heaven, hell,—a future life!

As if there could be a place where are congregated all the people who have lived for countless ages throughout the habitable universe! A place so vast — a place that would fill infinite space — is inconceivable, and therefore impossible. How can we wonder that certain savages believe the material atmosphere to be so thickly crowded with spirits that it is impossible to move without jostling them, and apologize to such as may be struck whenever they cast anything through the air?

"The time is not far off," the speaker concluded, "when both the Jewish and Christian religions will be relegated by the masses of mankind — as is already so done by the intelligent — to their proper places among the extinct religions of the past, from which indeed they have sprung, and in all essentials resemble. The masses must learn, as we have learned, that the universe is made up solely of matter and power. These are our gods, if we must have gods. Let our great god be called Power, and our derivative gods Force and Energy."

This address was followed by loud and repeated applause. Ere quiet had been fully restored, one of the professors, a bowed and half-stupid looking old man, rose and claimed the recognition of the headmaster, which appeared to be grudgingly granted.

"We have too much theory," he began, in a querulous tone of voice. "We all know that theories are being constantly superseded by other theories; facts are therefore the great thing. At my time of life one tires of theory, theory, theory, and leans more and more toward bare facts. Let me give you a few

delightful facts connected with savage mythology. The Orinoco Indians say the dew is the spittle of the stars. The Kamtchatdales say it is a sin to seize a red-hot coal otherwise than with the fingers when lighting a pipe. Among the Caribs one must learn to drink tobacco juice before he can become a priest. Bastian says the King of Quinsembo on the White Nile dares not look upon the sea lest he should die and his kingdom be destroyed. The Dyaks of Borneo call a very heavy rain a 'he-rain.' The ancient Russians said the four winds were four gods, which they worshipped. The Paraguays beat the air with their fists to give expression to their gladness when they behold the new moon; they also run against a wind-storm and threaten it with fire-brands; and again they strike terror into the storm by pommelling the air soundly. The Kasirs of Bengal say the stars are men who climbed to the top of a tree, and when the trunk was cut away were left on high in the branches. The Muscovies of South America say that the moon is a man, and his eclipse is caused by a dog tearing out his bowels; hence they hasten to render him assistance by making a terrible noise with a view to frighten the monster away. In this connection it is interesting to know that American Indians and other savages are wont to beat their dogs during an eclipse of the moon. Halleur says a negro explained to him that it was not the tree (under which he made offerings of palm oil, food, etc.) that was the fetich, but an invisible spirit dwelling there, the same being understood to enjoy only the spiritual portion of the food, rejecting

the material. When contagious diseases break out among the children on the island of Fernando Po, according to Bastian, the skin of a snake is fastened to a pole in the market place, and thither mothers bring their infants that they may touch this fetich. Among the Bambas of Angola, it is the custom for all respectable members of the tribe to pass through a 'temporary death.' When the priest shakes his calabash, full of all sorts of charms, the young men who have presented themselves are thrown into a cataleptic sleep, falling like dead bodies on the ground and remaining in this state for three days. Those who have not passed through this ceremony of the new birth are universally despised and are forbidden to join in the tribal dances. The Hottentots, reports Waitz, say the moon once commissioned the hare to inform mankind that even as he (the moon) always recovers his full after it has been lost, so they too may come to life again after death. The high priest, or chitome, of the Congo region —"

All through this curious recital the head-master had shown increasing uneasiness; he now rose suddenly, interrupting it. "I must call the speaker to order," he said; "his remarks have no perceptible bearing on the subject. At another time these interesting and valuable facts will be duly appreciated."

With a glance of contempt and disgust in the direction of the head-master, the interrupted speaker resumed his seat, and for some little time, to judge from the movement of his lips, continued his oration in a whisper. The presentation of the third division

of the subject being asked for, the professor whom we had met that afternoon in the hall devoted to comparative anatomy rose and came forward, amid applause. His address was in outline as follows: —

"How is our proposition, 'Is man anything more than a perfected beast?' to be answered from the standpoint of comparative anatomy? It is to be answered in the negative. It is well known that man is constructed on the same general type or model as other mammals. All the bones in his skeleton can be compared with corresponding bones in the monkey, the seal, or even the bat. So with his muscles, nerves, blood-vessels, and internal viscera. Comparing the higher animals in general with the lower, we find the same, and a careful examination of the whole ground compels us to recognize the fact that there is a gradual merging of a lower species into a higher, — the fact that we only arrive at the highest animals and plants after millions of years of true generation and slow modification from less complex life-forms, and these from others in ever lessening degree of complexity, until the common starting-point, from the lowest or one-celled organism, is reached.

"Let us take up and consider the links in this chain which are nearest its present wonderful terminus, — man. Let us consider the man-like apes."

He then turned and pointed out sketches which he had drawn on a black-board near the desk, representing the skeletons of a gibbon, an orang, a chimpanzee, a gorilla, and a man. The similarity between these skeletons, the seeming gradual superiority of

one to the other, until the most shapely — man's — was reached, was indeed striking, and well calculated to strengthen the speaker's arguments in the minds of his hearers.

"Let us take the man-like apes," he continued, "represented in the group before us, the skeletons of which so nearly resemble that of man as to startle us. At first we find this mammal a crawling creature, then we see him crawling or walking at will, and finally we observe him with almost the upright figure of man, having at last developed a mode of locomotion which entirely set free the fore limbs as organs of support, and enabled them to be used as organs of handling and throwing. The advantage thus gained was enormous; it was *the making of man,* — the primitive man. The gap between the lowest savage races and the tailless apes is no doubt wide, but it is not as wide as that between the savage and the man of civilization. It is unquestionable that the lowest savage is nearer to the ape than to the European, and from what we know of him we may form some idea of the primitive man.

"He was probably a step below even the lowest savage of this time, — a vigorous, cunning biped, with sense organs extraordinarily keen from constant exercise, strong instincts, turbulent and fickle emotions, small faculty of wonder, and wellnigh dormant reasoning power, careless of the morrow and forgetful of yesterday, living from hand to mouth on the raw products of nature, clothed in skin or bark, finding shelter in trees, ignorant of the

simplest arts, and helpless as a babe, yet strong in the love of life and a vague sense of a right to it, and slowly impelled by common perils and passions to form ties with his kind, the power of combination with them depending on sounds, signs, and gestures. Such, in general outline, we may safely accept as a portrait of the earliest human dwellers of the earth and the forefathers of our race, — the link between us and the tailless ape."

The speaker now called attention to three curious objects which he had drawn on another part of the board, and which from my position seemed exactly alike.

"I wish you to note," he said, "the even more remarkable similarity of the embryo man with that of a dog and a fish, as here represented. The germs from which all organisms spring are, to outward seeming, exactly alike, and through the earlier stages of all the higher animals this likeness persists even after the form is traceable in the embryo. For example, the embryo man has at the outset on each side of the neck gill-like slits similar to a fish, and later these give place to a membrane like that which supersedes gills in the development of birds and reptiles; the heart is at first a simple pulsating chamber, like that in worms; the backbone is prolonged into a movable tail, and the great toe is extended like our thumbs and like the toes of apes. At birth, the head is relatively larger and the arms relatively longer than in the adult, both features being distinctly ape-like. Thus does the egg from which man springs compress into a few weeks the results

of millions of years, and set before us the history of his development from fish-like and reptilian forms, and of his more immediate descent from a tailed hairy quadruped.

"The very savages of the pathless bush evince an instinctive recognition of this grand truth which is so flippantly denied by those ignoramuses called the Orthodox in civilized lands. For example, in South Africa, the natives would ask Monteiro's ass what he thought about things, regarding the beast's actions as human performances. And, what is yet more significant, the Arekunas of Guinea, according to Schomburgk, bring up children and monkeys together, the latter being suckled by the women, who show great affection for them; sometimes a woman is seen with both a child and a monkey at the breast, the two nurslings quarrelling. Raffenel says that on the Senegal, in Kordofan, and in Brazil, the natives believed that monkeys could speak, but refused to do so in fear lest they should be forced to work. Stellar says the Kamtchatdales believe that dogs can speak, and that they did so in ancient times, but since the day the descendants of the god Kutka sailed by them without replying to their inquiries they have proudly refused to speak any more. Finally, note the fact, pregnant with significance, that the California Indians claimed descent from a pack of prairie wolves, which 'sat on their tails until they wore them off.' Here, we have the whole theory of evolution in a nut-shell: *they sat on their tails until they wore them off!*"

The applause which followed this address was

almost deafening. Even after the shouts and clapping of hands had ceased, a buzz of delighted voices filled the vast room. Suddenly, high up among the students in a part of the circus almost directly opposite me, a tall figure rose and stood silent, as if awaiting an opportunity to be heard, and gradually a whisper went from mouth to mouth that some one wished to speak. Then, in the first moment of general quiet, a rich, mellow, and to me strangely familiar voice, was heard: —

"I crave a word in rejoinder to what has been said. Will you hear me?"

This request was evidently unusual and unexpected, and the head-master hesitated, looking searchingly in the direction of the speaker. But so far up in the circus the light was dim, and no face there could be distinctly seen; only could it be told that the tall figure was clothed, not in the universal black gown and cap, but in some sort of light-colored garment.

"I am not aware who has addressed me," said the head-master, adding, hesitatingly, after a pause, during which the unknown failed to answer with his name, as was expected. "If you will be brief, speak on."

IX.

THE UNKNOWN SPEAKS.

"It has been said here that it was merely through dreams that man first came to believe in another self or soul and a future life. Let us say that this specious argument is cleverly planned, if you will, and well calculated to entrap the unwary, but it will not stand."

A rising murmur of disapproving voices here interrupted the speaker, and for some moments he was not allowed to proceed. The interruption would probably have continued as long as the unknown remained on his feet, had he not turned upon the disturbers with a voice of command.

"Silence! Let me speak. It is my right. When I have done, you may use my words as you will."

After the pause of a moment, he continued: "This is a specious but fallacious argument, based altogether on blind supposition. The true reason of a belief in a soul rests in the fact that the idea of a God and a future life is inscribed from birth upon the hearts of all mankind. This is the voice of God speaking from within, which every one may hear who will. The very first of the prehistoric races

of men, who lived a simple child-like pastoral life, subsisting on the crude products of nature and ignorant of the arts, hearkened to this voice, — this dictate through heaven from the Lord flowing into the interiors of their thought. It taught them that there was a God to be worshipped, that man would live forever, that there was good, that there was evil, and that he who would be wise must refuse the evil and choose the good. This voice of God from within was after a time confirmed by the voice from without, — by the discourse of Divinely inspired angels, and finally by a written Word, which, with the art of writing, was given to man. Divine truth has thus existed in the world, in some form, from the most ancient times even till now, and this because through it there is communication of heaven with earth, and by it man is enabled to live in happiness to eternity. I have been instructed that but few are missing from those ancient heavens peopled by the primitive races of the earth; for in the beginning all but a very few gave ear to that internal dictate from above, and when the outward voice of revelation was heard, only the perverse refused to hearken. But man was not compelled, was ever left in freedom, and with the lapse of ages corruption crept in and grew. There was the dawn, the noonday, the evening, the night. And after the night another dawn; out of a remnant of the good were raised up a new race and civilization, and a new revelation was given to lead them through their noonday, and to retard their evening and night, toward which the growth of evil surely carried

them. So have we come, after the lapse of ages upon ages, to the present Divine Word, Church, and civilization existing on the earth. Not the idle dreams, therefore, of a self-subsisting man, as you blindly claim, but the voice of God speaking from within and from without taught man that he had a soul and that there was a future life.

"It has been said here that the phenomena of nature acting upon the virgin mind of the primitive man produced several gods and myths, and that these were the parent stock of the vast systems which followed. I have been instructed that the truth is altogether otherwise; that the confused Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, indeed every mythology, had its root in a simple and true religion of a prehistoric age, — a religion which drew life from a preceding revelation, a religion the soul of which was the worship of the one only God. In the course of succeeding ages, as the race fell away from its early intelligence and integrity, the different names by which in ancient times the several attributes of the one God were called came to be regarded as separate deities, and concomitant with a deepening decline came the multiplication of these several false gods into many. Then and only then were produced the polytheistic religions of ancient historical kingdoms, and the present confused and perverted faiths of the heathen and savage.

"You deride the idea of a heaven which could hold all who have ever lived, not knowing or caring to know that the natural universe is finite and measurable, but that the spiritual universe is infinite and

immeasurable; therefore you think it is no wonder that savages say the material atmosphere is so thickly crowded with spirits that no one can stir without jostling them. This example which you employ serves to confirm what has just been said of an ancient pure religion as the fountain head of later confused mythologies. In the noonday of that early true religion, it was known and acknowledged that the spiritual world or universe was not removed from the natural by a matter of material distance, but was, as it were, within or above, as the soul is within or above the body, the relation between the two being similar to that between thought and speech. This idea, like all other acknowledged truths of that early time, was after the lapse of ages perverted, made gross, materialized: therefore, among the degenerate descendants of those ancient wise people, you now find it in the form of a belief in the presence of spirits in the surrounding *material* atmosphere.

"It has been said here that man has no immortal soul, but is only a perfected beast, and this because his bone structure is observed to be similar to that of beasts. How can he be so like the beast, you ask, unless he be descended from the beast? I will tell you. He is like the beast, or, to speak correctly, the beast is like *him*, because everything in nature from the greatest to the least is in its own way an image of the human form, and this is in turn an image of the all-creating Divine form from which every man, animal, and plant subsists, draws daily life. That is to say, the creative Divine is imprinted upon

the very substance and structure of all created things.

"You have compared the fœtuses of a fish, a dog, and a man, and because they are outwardly similar in their earlier stages of development you argue that they are essentially one and the same in origin. Blind leaders of the blind. Have not your own investigations with the microscope taught you that the deeper you penetrate the objects of nature the more complex, wonderful, inexplicable, they appear? If then you are baffled by nature itself, which is but the outer covering or bark, what do you know of the spirit? What do you know of the inner spiritual forms animating these three fœtuses and making of them, although outwardly similar, three distinct created things, two containing only the souls of beasts, but the third enveloping the immortal soul of a man?

"You are wont to say that you would believe in God if you could see him. Hypocrites! You would have believed if you had wished to believe, for the idea of the one God as a Divine Man is inscribed upon the heart of every creature from his birth. You refuse to believe in any but those things which are visible or demonstrable to the grosser senses; you scorn the idea of a future life, and yet you now *live* the very 'future life' which you deride. You have so debased and deformed your understanding that you see light as darkness and darkness as light, and were you permitted to see heaven itself it would appear to you a hell. You cover your eyes with your own hands. The wisdom of the noble ancients,

which has gradually retired from inmost things to outermost, has with you descended even to the dust of the earth and revels there like a grovelling worm, seeing only the dust, and refusing to believe that the stars shine in heaven!"

As these bold words were slowly and distinctly uttered by the tall unknown high up in the circus, the hearers sat spellbound, — not from love but from hatred of what was said. An overmastering sphere about the speaker seemed to compel order and attention, the pale, averted faces and clenched hands of the professors manifestly indicating that they kept their seats against their will, restrained by some influence which they could not defy. But intuitively I knew that as soon as the speaker's last word should be uttered the spell would be broken and pandemonium would reign. And it was even so. There was one moment of dead silence, and then the whole house rose as one man, uttering shouts of derision and hate. I looked into Alaric's eyes, and without a word we started for the brave speaker's side, shouldering our way as best we could.

"Catch him!" was the enraged cry. "Do not let him escape. He must be *silenced!*"

And we knew that they would kill him if they could. After a breathless, nerve-tensing struggle we at last drew near, and then it came over me with the shock of a great and bewildering and joyful surprise that the brave unknown had not been harmed, — had not been *touched.* The violent hands which threatened him were powerless to do him hurt. There he stood, clothed in shining white

garments and encompassed by a wide sphere of soft light which stood out in startling relief against the dark circus and its darker crowding figures, — secure as though he stood within stone walls. I could not see his face, being behind, but I saw the white garments and the soft light, and the crowd parting and falling back before him as if thrust aside by a mighty hand. He was walking forward with deliberate, fearless dignity among his enemies, and presently passed out through a door at the other end of the circus. The crowd about me now scattered, and I was free to rush after him to the door. But when I looked out he was gone.

Was it a dream? Turning, I passed my hands across my eyes and glanced over the circus. No, it was no dream; there had been some strange interruption certainly. For I now beheld an amazing scene. The professors and two thirds of the students were sitting in their places, their heads covered with the wide sleeves of their gowns. The remainder of the students were crowded near the circus doors, and were conversing in low, excited voices. A second glance showed me that they were leaving the hall by twos and threes, and in a short while they were all gone. It was unmistakable that they were disturbed by what had happened, and had perhaps lost faith in their teachers. As I looked back toward the professors and students whose heads were covered, certain words which the angel — for it could only have been an angel — had uttered flashed through my mind: —

"You cover your eyes with your own hands.

You are like worms grovelling in the dust, seeing only the dust and refusing to believe that the stars shine in heaven."

My curiosity was aroused. Though desirous to depart with all speed, (Alaric had evidently gone,) I sat down to see what would happen. I had not long to wait. In a few moments the head-master uncovered his face and looked about him stupidly, and one after another the professors and students did likewise.

"What is this! Have we been asleep?" I heard them ask each other.

"Ah, I recollect," answered one of the professors, cheerfully, "a lunatic wandered in here and interrupted us with some childish babble. He had to be put out."

"Ah, yes, yes, yes! That was it!" exclaimed several others, seizing with eagerness upon this explanation.

"Let us proceed," said the head-master, pompously. "It is now my agreeable duty to decide whether the question has been proven, and my decision is that the able arguments to which we have listened have a solid foundation upon reason and experience, and beyond all doubt prove that man is merely a perfected beast, and that the claim that he has an immortal soul is no more than an absurd dream."

The most enthusiastic applause greeted this deliverance from the chair. While it still lasted I arose, oppressed by a seeming physical suffocation, and hurried into the open air. I looked around me,

wondering what had become of Alaric, and, after standing about expectantly for a few minutes, walked some seventy-five or a hundred yards out into the sandy plain, baring my head and drinking in long draughts of the fresh air. It was then that I suddenly became aware of a strange, pleasing presence at my side, and turning beheld the figure of a man. It was a dark night, but the man's face was clearly visible to me in a soft circle of light which seemed to encompass it. My heart leaped in my breast; I knew that face, that golden beard, those eyes so beautiful with the beauty of nobleness. It was the angel Ariel.

I was so overcome with surprise and joy, and a reverence not unmixed with something of fear, that I should have fallen at his feet had he not gently and firmly stayed me with his hand.

"You have not forgotten me," he said.

That rich soft voice! — had I not heard it within the hour? "Oh! — was it you," I panted, — "was it you who spoke in the gymnasium just now?"

"It was I."

There was a moment of silence — then: "They are mad," I said. "After you had gone out I saw that they had covered their heads. And presently they said that they had been asleep. They refused to believe their own eyes."

"I knew they would not attend, and did not speak for them," was the reply. "I spoke only for those whose ears might not be entirely closed to heavenly instruction; my words were for you and for those young students who have now come out from among

their infatuated teachers and wandered away in the direction of places where they will be taught the truth."

"I thank God that you came," I said. "So much is now clear to me which before was dark. Teach me, O good, kind —"

"None is good but one, God," interrupted the angel. "Come with me," he continued after a moment, "and you will be permitted to see the condition of these worshippers of nature after they have been here some little time."

He turned, and I followed him across the sand in a northwesterly direction. As we passed near the college two of the professors who were taking the air walked by within a few feet of us, but apparently did not see us.

"You know," one of them was saying, in an eager, insistent way, "that I am already famous in two hemispheres for having proved that Christopher Columbus was only a manitou myth of the American Indian. The public will, therefore, be the more ready to accept the proofs which I expect to bring forward as soon as Queen Victoria dies to show that she was really nothing more than an old British sun-god myth."

The listener here made some unintelligible rejoinder, and the two passed out of hearing. After but a very short walk, the college behind us, or its shining lighted windows, had faded from view, and we presently stood before a long low building of stone as black as pitch, out of the small irregular windows of which a faint light streamed. As we

knocked on the door several dark heavy birds flew up, with hoarse cries, from a stunted tree near by, and flapped away, the long husky stroke of their wings suggesting the vulture of the natural world.

"To such places as this they come, some after about a year, some before," said the angel. "They then enter upon a new state which is that of their interiors. In the world of spirits man passes through three states. The first is the state of his exteriors, during which he is apparently just as he was in the world, acting prudently and decorously, and feigning an amiable countenance although he may be inwardly wicked. But because it is not permitted here that one should have a divided mind, — should think evil and speak good, — he comes after a time into the state of his interiors, when, if he be good, he freely speaks and acts from the worthy intentions of his heart, but if evil, he casts aside restraint, speaks his real thoughts, and acts out his wickedness so far as is permitted. In this state he voluntarily seeks those places on the confines of hell which externally correspond to his character, as is the case here. With the evil the second and third state are the same, but with the good the third state is one of preparation for heaven. The worshippers of nature whom you have lately seen are still in their exteriors; we shall now see certain of those who have come into the state of their interiors."

A guardian now appeared with a lantern, and, having opened the door with a disagreeable accompaniment of rattling chains and bars, invited us to follow him along a dark narrow corridor to a large

room, which was found to contain about twenty-five men, some of whom were writing at tables, some walking back and forth and conversing, while others sat in their seats lost in reverie. All of them looked prematurely old and wrinkled, and were objects of repulsion because of the evil expression on their pinched faces and in their glassy eyes, which latter, in the dim light of the candles illumining the place, seemed to burn and glitter with insane, consuming passion.

The angel led me from one group to another, asking questions of several.

"What are you writing, friend?" he courteously inquired of one of those who sat with pens and paper at one of the tables.

"A work on philosophy which is destined to supersede all philosophies that have ever been devised," was the enthusiastic answer.

"You have attempted a difficult task."

"Yes, but the more the glory of success. Never fear but I shall succeed. In the first place, I have the genius of a god; in the second place, I shall achieve wonderful results by expressing my thoughts in phrases so involved and obscure that it will be impossible to tell just what is meant, and the reader will imagine that the most profound things are being expounded. Several have tried this before my time, but none half so cleverly as I. In the third place, I expect to perform the unexampled intellectual feat of demonstrating a proposition and then immediately proving the exact contrary." He added that this, however, was easy enough; there

were always apparent reasons which might be cited to prove any proposition whatsoever, no matter how absurd.

"You remind me of a man I once heard of," said the angel, "who could prove that a crow was white and then that it was black. The color is merely in the coat, he said; remove the feathers, and you find that the real crow is white. Then, applying himself to prove the contrary, he asserted that the true crow was black, because, although the bird's skin was white, a crow in the mind of every one is unquestionably a black thing."

"That is an excellent illustration of my idea," cried the philosopher, delighted. "I shall make use of it in my book."

Another inmate of the room informed us that he was engaged in a scientific investigation which he confidently expected would enable him, in the end, to build a planet of his own, and afterward perhaps a universe. This done, he would proclaim himself a god. Being cautioned not to be over-sanguine of success in such a career, he sprang up enraged, lifting his chair with wild looks and words; but on marking the approach of one of the guards he hesitated, and presently had subsided. The angel then explained to me that guards were always there (as well as in hell) to keep the wicked from injuring each other.

Still another inmate confided to us that he was engaged in proving that freedom to commit all crime, so called, was the inalienable possession of sovereign man. "What *is* crime anyhow but a mat-

ter of opinion? The Christians say that we must not do so and so, the savages that we must not do so and so, and *I* say we may do what we please. There is no such thing as sin; the only real crime is the atrocious calling to account of the so called criminals."

When asked what was his vocation, one of those who sat lost in reverie replied absently: "Atoms, cells, corpuscles, nebulas, protoplasm." The question being repeated, he answered: "Protoplasm, nebulas, corpuscles, cells, atoms."

"When their state becomes such that they can no longer remain here," said the angel, as later we came out into the open air, "they are removed to some eternal workshop in hell, where they are kept in something of order by being compelled to labor for their daily bread, and where they sink still deeper into their insane phantasies, suffering torments because they are not allowed to gratify their evil desires."

X.

A PARTING AND A MEETING.

As we passed out, more dark, ugly birds flew up with harsh cries from the stunted tree; and I started back, apprehensively, clutching my companion's arm, as a long curving figure, which could only have been that of an enormous snake, slid heavily across our path.

"These things which appear to us are representatives corresponding to the state of the men we have just seen," said the angel, reassuringly. "In regions where dwell those whose minds are clouded with falsity and grovel in the insanities of self-derived intelligence, hideous birds and frightful reptiles appear. But where the mind is clear and truly rational, from a knowledge and love of genuine truth, there beautiful birds and other agreeable animals are seen. This is because all animals correspond to either good or evil affections. Birds in general correspond to the faculties of the mind, or to things intellectual. This was known among the ancients on the earth, and that is why the early Greeks gave wings to the horse Pegasus, under which emblem they figured the human intellect and the power with which it is endowed of rising upward or elevating itself above earthly things to the contemplation of heavenly things."

"And was not a lingering perception of this forgotten truth," I asked, eagerly, "the origin of the expression *soaring* when applied to a flight of the imagination or intellect?"

"Undoubtedly. All metaphor has its root in this knowledge of correspondences among the ancients."

The lights and the dim outline of the college were now directly before us. We drew near and halted at the rock whereon Alaric and I had rested early in the evening. Seating himself, the angel invited me to do likewise, and resumed his instruction.

Finally I made bold to speak to him of my desire to enter upon the duties of a permanent calling, and confessed that I aspired to a final entrance into a life of heavenly usefulness similar to his own. I mentioned this after much hesitation and circumlocution, trembling with dread of what his attitude might be toward my presumption. But instead of rebuking me for cherishing a vain ambition, he caught my hand in a warm grasp, and said solemnly, but joyfully, "May the Lord be with you and help you forward, my brother!"

I could not speak, so profound was my happiness. Tears of rapture filled my eyes as I reverently kissed the angel's hand. He talked to me a long time and earnestly, assuring me that what I looked forward to would be mine if I truly desired it — as soon as I made myself ready. I should pass through many temptations, and I must strive to conquer my evils, — to rid myself of them, — and in the mean time learn gladly to do whatever the Divine Providence should send in my way.

"What shall I do to conquer my evil inclinations?" I asked, eagerly.

"For one thing, let your prayer be ever that your eyes may be kept open to see and recognize evil, especially in yourself. Pray that you may ever be led to think rightly from truth, and to act wisely in the light thereof."

"It is too true that my eyes are often not open," I said. "There are times when I cannot see that there is evil in me at all."

"At such times let me urge you to examine yourself," was the quick response, "not carelessly, but deliberately and with earnest determination. Explore the very intents of your thought and the purposes of your heart. Ask yourself what are those things which you love above all others. Suppose that every restraint were removed, that no disastrous consequences would follow the commission of any sin, examine and see if in that case you would still desire always to act with perfect decorum, honor, and justice. With your heart laid bare before your own eyes, ask yourself these questions:

"'Do I love truth for its own sake, or because I wish to be thought wise and good? Do I love what is good because it is of heaven, and hate evil because it is of hell?

"'Is my desire to enter upon the duties of a worthy calling the result of a love of serving the Lord and of being useful to the neighbor, or from an ambition to make for myself a name and a place among men?

"'Do I wish the neighbor well equally with myself? Am I inclined to do him justice even as I

would have justice done to myself, or do I take pleasure in being unjust to him in ever so small a degree? Am I inclined to find pleasure in ever so slight an exaggeration of the facts which appear to accuse him? Let me think well before I answer.

"'Do I love my friends for the good that is in them, or for mere beauty and grace alone, or because through subtle flattery or other arts they make themselves agreeable?

"'Do I take pleasure in excusing evil acts in the name of charity? Do I excuse certain faults in myself and condemn them in others? Do I palliate my offences when they rise up in my memory and accuse me, or do I acknowledge them in all their enormity and humbly repent of them?

"'Do my thoughts incline toward a faithful and abiding affection for one woman, or do I contemplate with pleasure the love of several?

"'When I recognize that I have done a good action, do I at once ascribe its authorship to the Lord, or do I take merit to myself?

"'Do I regard the Divine Providence in all the affairs of life, and reverently lift my soul toward the Lord God as the Source of all life, truth, and good, and do I acknowledge myself verily to be, but for influx from above, wholly evil?'"

Listening to these searching questions, the deep happiness of the past hour faded away, and humiliation and sorrow overcame me. The certainty of my conviction was seen as in a blaze of light.

"God help me!" I said, in anguish. "I am guilty. I cannot truthfully answer these ques-

tions as they should be answered. There is no hope for me."

"Ah, but there is hope," was the gentle assurance. "Were there none, you would not now be listening patiently to instruction. You began the struggle against evil while in the world, and all who thus make a real beginning may finish the work here. Only keep on. Keep in mind these and similar questions, and strive to put yourself in the way toward meeting the requirements indicated, and you will advance. It is after all not so difficult, if one will but try with constancy and determination."

Shortly after pronouncing these words, the angel rose abruptly, saying, "I am recalled, and must now leave you."

"How are you 'recalled'?" I asked, loath to see him go. "No messenger has come to summon you."

"Nevertheless, I am recalled," he said, and, in the soft light enveloping his face, I saw a smile upon his lips. "I have received a sign," he added.

I wondered what the sign was, but would not ask him. "I shall pray the Lord that I may see you again," I said.

"If you do, and truly have need of me, you will see me again without fail," was the confident assurance.

He pressed my hand warmly in farewell, and turning walked from my view in the dark night. Left alone, I stood still many minutes, going over in mind what he had said to me, and reviewing the events of the evening.

"It must be long past midnight," was my thought at last, as I roused myself and looked about me.

What should I do? There was now scarcely a light shining from the windows of either the college itself or the students' quarters, and there was therefore no chance of a lodging, even could I make up my mind to accept it. What then? — Tramp back to Newcomers? It would be morning ere I arrived, and besides I wanted to speak with Alaric before leaving the neighborhood. As I hesitated, wondering how I should feel if I passed the remainder of the night stretched on the sand, a figure was suddenly outlined in the neighboring gloom, and a voice cried softly, "Is that you, Burton?"

It was Alaric. I caught his hand gladly, we took a few steps backward, and presently sat down together on the flat rock which was now a familiar friend. After a short discussion of the events of the evening, I said, urgently, "Come, my friend, let us leave this neighborhood at once."

"Where to go?"

"Anywhere almost, if only we leave this place. Back to Newcomers first, and then on to some other city, perhaps, and finally to a heavenly city, if good fortune, or rather the Divine Providence, shall lead us so far."

"It would be more agreeable than taking the journey alone," rejoined Alaric, thoughtfully. "But how can we know? It may not be intended that any two should take that journey side by side, but that each one should meet and conquer in his own individual temptations."

"Doubtless you are right, but still we might continue for some time in company," I said; "and certainly the common peril which threatens us here —"

"A peril it is," interrupted Alaric, in an absent way; "and for my part I should wish to be gone this hour but for those two dear old friends of mine. I — really I can't turn my back on them yet. Could n't you wait for me, Burton, until I reason with them a little more?" The question was asked almost beseechingly.

"No," I answered with decision, although shaken by his tone; "it would be wrong. How can you," I continued, "still have hope after those speeches? That ought to have opened your eyes. I speak candidly."

"They don't really believe in it, — that is what I think," he said, with a sadness which in a measure belied his words. "They are carried away by an infatuation for cleverness and learning of that sort."

"We ought to love our friends for the good that is in them, and for nothing else," was my rejoinder, remembering the words of the angel Ariel.

"It does not seem to me that I love them for anything else," — with a sigh. "They are such kind-hearted fellows, — indeed they are much better than you imagine."

"That is only the outside," I said. "Amiability is a mask easily worn. If *that* were the test, who could not pose as an angel of light?"

"I may be no better than they," sighed Alaric.

"If you give up your principles for their sakes," I rejoined, without pity, "you will become worse

than they. Who are you to play providence for them? If they can be saved the Lord will save them."

"The Lord may use me as an instrument," was the solemn answer, and I felt rebuked.

I believed, however, that I was right. I saw that he was set in his determination, and, though the mere thought gave me pain, it was clear to me that I should leave him.

"We must part, then," I said, in a shaken voice. "I cannot remain here and play with fire."

"Yes, it will be better," he answered, scarcely above his breath.

As we rose, he caught my hand in a lingering clasp. I could not see his face, but I knew that he was struggling to control himself.

"Good-by, dear friend," I said. "I trust we shall meet again erelong."

"Good-by," he repeated. He threw his left arm across my shoulder — almost around my neck — as he spoke. "We might have been dear brothers," he said.

Then we turned hurriedly from each other and walked away in opposite directions.

"The love of a warm heart like his is worth striving for," was my after thought. "Still, I was right and he was wrong."

Later, as I walked on, the light began to break, and I had gone no great distance when the sun rose. I turned and looked back toward the college of the "wise," but it was now lost to view beyond the sandy plain. In fancy I pictured the wise ones ris-

ing and preparing for the day, — preparing again to impart their wisdom to their blind disciples; pictured them, as they one by one were let into the state of their interiors, dropping the mask, passing out from the college's proud walls and halting in the intermediate house of preparation which the angel had shown me, then wandering downward into the depths which I knew not of, and whence they would return no more.

And Alaric, — it was pain to think of him.

After some hours of rest at the inn, late in the morning, I went for a walk in a crowded street of the city of Newcomers. Poor Alaric's strong attachment for his two erring friends was still uppermost in my thoughts, and, as I walked, I asked myself the question: —

"Is there any one who could so influence me among those whom I have called friend? Do I bear such a friendship of love to any creature? Not I. Stop a moment; there is that dear, dear friend, my Cousin Paul.

"Ah, yes, my Cousin Paul! Why have I not thought of him before? — of him who was my dearest friend on earth, and who, as I well know, can perhaps be found, for his entry into the spiritual world was but five months in advance of mine. Have I, for some good reason, been withheld from thinking of him till now? But suppose I do love him and would allow myself to be influenced by him? The case has no parallel with that of Alaric and his two friends; the influence of so noble a man as my Cousin Paul is not a thing to be afraid

of and shun. It is rather to be courted. Ah, yes! the friend I love could help me, — could do great things for me. Where is he, then? Could I but find him!"

As my thoughts thus ran on, as it were in a tumultuous stream of enthusiasm, I looked up and saw only a few feet away a young man whose eyes were intently fixed on me, — a young man of medium height, of a pleasing face, a dignified bearing, and a serious expression which seemed to reach beyond his thirty years. He smiled at me as our eyes met, and, with sensations of genuine delight, I recognized my Cousin Paul.

XI.

THE MAN AND HIS WIFE.

THIS cousin of mine was not less than five years my senior, but even before my arrival at adult age he treated me as though I were his equal, not merely in years, but in every other respect. Unwise this may have been, but it did not fail to win my lasting affection. My Cousin Paul appeared to me to be the kindest and most agreeable of men. Well do I remember how patiently he would put by his own studies when we were at school and consume half an hour helping me to construe a few lines in Horace or Homer. He seemed never to tire of doing kind acts, and was always an unusually popular young man. Many a time I wondered how he could so willingly sacrifice the time which he could have valuably employed in his own pursuits. My sister was never as fond of him personally as I, but we agreed that his was a singularly unselfish nature.

I sometimes found it difficult to reconcile my cousin's character with his religious principles, for these were avowedly founded on the mystical doctrine of faith alone. If merely to believe certain things, independently of the love and living of truth and good for their own sakes, was sufficient for his salvation, why should he take pains to practise the

virtues? Could it be that he did so merely to be well thought of by men, merely to awaken gratitude and thus secure the friendship of those around him as a means to certain ends which he had in view? Indignantly I rejected this suggestion even before it was fully uncovered in my mind, but none the less did I feel conscious of a certain inconsistency whenever I thought of my cousin's religion. He did not belong, however, to the aggressive, camp-meeting type of religious men; he merely lived a blameless life in the external, quietly insisting on the tenets of his faith, and certainly no one among all those I knew seemed to me more worthy of heaven.

At the age of twenty-seven my cousin married Miss Mary Gordon, a beautiful young girl who inherited a large fortune. There was something about this marriage which I never quite understood, — something damaging to my cousin in the view of certain critical observers, — but I was always sure he had done nothing really wrong. At the time that he began paying Miss Gordon marked attention, it was known that she was about to become engaged (if not already so) to one Edward Ray, an architect, of more worth than means. How it happened nobody quite knew, but after meeting Paul's advances with great coldness it presently developed that her attitude had changed, and that young Ray had been rejected. I was profoundly surprised at the time, but did not fail to acquit my cousin of dishonor, although it was broadly hinted that through clever scheming he had contrived to exhibit Ray in an unworthy light before the woman he loved. It was

said by some that Miss Gordon accepted Paul because of his business abilities, but it was believed in our family that she was in love with him. About two years after the day of the wedding my newly made cousin — of whom I had become very fond in a brotherly way — fell ill and died, and less than three months later her husband was thrown from his carriage and instantly killed. During the few months which elapsed before I too was seized by my last illness, I often thought of them, picturing their reunion in the spiritual world. For unquestionably they must each desire to be reunited with the other, since, according to my view, no woman could be so happy as the wife of my Cousin Paul, and no man could be so blessed as the husband of my Cousin Mary.

My delight when I recognized this beloved relative and friend in a street of the city of Newcomers may be imagined. "He has not yet been raised up to heaven, then," was my instant thought; "he soon will be, I am sure." In my eagerness, I think I actually leaped toward him, calling his name. A few moments later we were walking down the street, arm in arm, asking each of the other unnumbered questions.

"Is Cousin Mary with you?" was one of my first.

"Yes." Was it possible that I missed a certain glad ring which I expected in that "Yes"? At once I chid myself for this reflection; what right had I to require of a man that he should declare his love for his wife in the very tone of his voice? I was too exacting, too imaginative.

"Yes," said my cousin, "and you must come and dine with us. She will be glad to see you. We are expecting some friends after dinner whom you might also like to meet."

Later, he insisted on my going home with him to luncheon forthwith, and I readily consented. The house was in one of the handsome streets, and in general appearance was not unlike their former home in the natural world. I could have desired no warmer welcome than Cousin Mary gave me. She was the same lovely woman, in most respects, but I soon noticed that she was quieter, and that there seemed a faint tinge of melancholy about her reserve. There was a change in Paul, too, although I was some little time in recognizing just what it was. Perhaps the best way to indicate it would be to say that his face seemed to have become a little less refined in expression, and that in conversation he was less inclined to look at the serious side of events and draw a moral.

"How very comfortable you are!" I said to the husband and wife, as they led me through the luxurious rooms.

"Yes, — ah! yes; but the trouble is," said Cousin Paul, with a half sigh, looking at me shrewdly, "the trouble is that my title to it is not unlimited. Nobody knows when it may be necessary to vacate."

"Yes, of course," I said; "this is only a city of sojourn. We are not to stop here longer than may be useful."

"Well, for my part, I'd be willing to stop here permanently," said my cousin, looking about him covetously. "This is heaven enough for me."

"You astonish me," I said, feeling a sense of disappointment. Turning to Cousin Mary, "Would you be content to remain here always?" I asked.

"We might all be a great deal happier than we now are," she answered, evasively, hardly looking at me.

From that moment it was clear to me that she was an unhappy woman, although, as was equally clear, she struggled bravely day after day to avoid a disclosure. But in the spiritual world it is not possible to conceal with the same success as in the natural, even in the first state; and in the second state one's character may be read as from a book. There was a pathetic wistfulness in Cousin Mary's beautiful brown eyes as they wandered about the room, avoiding my direct, inquiring look. Unhappy she certainly was, — but wherefore? Could it be that, after all; she did not love her husband? How strange that would be! What more could she desire than this man, who combined high character with intellectual cleverness and marked personal attractions? I had heard the assertion made that any good woman could love any good man, and had always refused to subscribe to any such sentiment, as failing to square with my ideas of true love; yet it was difficult to believe that Cousin Mary could not love such a man as her husband.

"You two are so much happier than I," I said at dinner, not with absolute sincerity perhaps. "You have each other, while I am a lonely wanderer."

"It will not always be so, I hope, Cousin Oswald," rejoined Paul's wife, with ready sympathy, seem-

ing to pass her own doubtful case by and think only of me.

"It is best, no doubt, for the present," I said, resignedly. "Were I in your place, I fear I should be too much occupied with present happiness to think much of the future."

"And why should you think so much of the future?" Cousin Paul asked lightly.

"Because the things of the present here are even more transient and worthless relatively than in the world. We are only sojourners, preparing through our experiences here for either heaven or hell, as the case may be."

"Yes, that is the unfortunate part of it," rejoined my cousin, in a changed voice.

"How 'unfortunate'?"

"I mean that I should be quite willing to stay here. This is good enough for me. A bird in the hand, you know."

"What a strange way to feel!" I said. "It is as if a boy of thirteen were to declare his desire to remain a boy all his life. For my part, I look forward eagerly to the fuller, riper state which awaits us in heaven, toward which I earnestly hope all of us are surely bound."

"I hope so, indeed," said Cousin Paul. His wife, however, made no rejoinder, staring into her plate like one who knows not what to say, and therefore says nothing.

"And even though we may be bound in that direction," I continued, "we all have evils which must yet be overcome, and their subjection ought to be

our daily concern. That is what I meant just now by 'thinking of the future.'"

"I heard a good deal of that kind of talk when I first came to this city," said my cousin, complacently, "but — begging your pardon, Oswald — I didn't think it worth my while to pay much attention to it. Of course, it is well enough for us to act honorably, but after all our *real* concern is whether we have faith or not. Now, ever since I was converted I have been confident that I *had* faith, and I have never seen why I should trouble myself further as long as I was not an actual law-breaker."

I had heard my cousin speak in this strain when we were both in the natural world, but I was then so ignorant and thoughtless that it made little impression on me; now, however, the theory appeared atrocious. I therefore spoke up warmly to controvert it, and we argued through the remainder of the dinner. Cousin Paul's idea seemed to be that introduction into heaven was due to nothing more than an act of pure mercy, the mere opening of a gate to a certain number, whose articles of faith constituted their tickets of admission; true regeneration had really nothing to do with it, and therefore the most despicable of men, if only on his death-bed he would say, "I believe," might enter heaven and become an angel of light. Against this baleful falsity I spoke with all the force that I could bring to bear, striving to make my cousin see clearly, as I saw clearly after all the instruction which I had received, that it was as impossible for a man to enter heaven without first being purified from the evils into which he had been

born and which he acquired as for a fish to live out of water without first being provided with lungs corresponding to those of other animals which breathe the air; that only those who by long and persistent effort have built up heaven within them, or moulded their own souls in conformity with heaven's laws, can either see, enter, or *endure* the life of heaven.

My cousin obstinately stood by his absurd theory, refusing to surrender the easy "scheme of salvation" which he had elected to believe in, and his state of mind filled me with great sadness. During our argument, which was interrupted finally by the arrival of the guests of the evening, I noticed that Cousin Mary listened intently, and seemed to give adherence to my statements rather than to my opponent's, which served to confirm me the more in my belief that she did not love her husband.

The guests who came in to spend the evening were some dozen or fifteen in number, and for the most part looked and behaved exactly as the average person is wont to do in company. They spoke, in general, of small matters, that which had happened recently in a social way, that which was soon to happen, and otherwise showed that their minds were thoroughly taken up with the trifling affairs of the moment. Except in one instance, there was nothing to indicate that any of them was cognizant of the fact that the present situation might fittingly be described as a dissolving view of a grand kaleidoscope, which would shortly be resolved into the fixed and unalterable in heaven or in hell.

Only two among the visitors need particular men-

tion here. One of these was Miss Isabella Grubb, a lady no longer young, who had always appeared to be a devoted friend of my cousin's, and whose death had preceded his some two or three months. The other was Edward Ray, the young man whom my Cousin Mary had rejected, and who, as I now learned, had entered the spiritual world shortly after I did.

Conversation with Ray was at first a little labored, owing to a certain reserve which had distinguished our intercourse since the date of a youthful quarrel. But as I had been chiefly to blame, had long ago repented, and was now more than ever in the mood to make amends, all obstructing restraint was presently cleared from between us; for Ray was a thoroughly good fellow, as was evident in more ways than one. His attitude toward my cousin's wife was such as to excite admiration. No one could have suspected that he was a former lover, he being neither distant in manner toward her, nor showing an exaggerated respect, but uniformly simple, frank, gentlemanly. In the course of our conversation I was pleased to find that he was not without a rational conception of his position as a novitiate spirit, and was concerned about much beside the events of the hour.

I had not known Miss Isabella Grubb very well in the world, but had heard a good deal about her through my friends. She was fairly good-looking, and had the air of an amiable, well-bred woman. Had she been ten years younger and the possessor of a fortune, according to certain gossiping ladies, my Cousin Paul would never have married Miss

Gordon. My sister avowedly disliked her, and once told me that, were Miss Grubb not so extremely shrewd, she would long since have gained the reputation for a malicious gossip. Experience had taught me that the best of women were apt, on occasion, to speak more damagingly of one of their sex than the circumstances warranted; I therefore listened without concluding that Miss Grubb was necessarily the opposite of a well-disposed woman, and as I now met her at my cousin's house my mind was certainly open and unprejudiced.

Fifteen minutes of conversation, however, were sufficient to furnish me with no good opinion of her. She began by pronouncing a flowery congratulation in view of my elevation to the "higher life" of the spiritual world, and never afterward, even by remote inference, referred to that life or its duties. Immediately descending to personalities, she commented right and left with great freedom, and gave me a few vivid glimpses into the history of nearly every person in the room; all this without encouragement from me, — indeed, in the face of efforts to speak of other things. She spent much time discussing Ray, who, it was hinted, was little less than a consummate hypocrite, despite his gentlemanly manner, being in love with and having deliberate designs on Paul's wife. This information was imparted less by bold assertion than by sly insinuation and covert innuendo, accompanied with suggestive shrugs and glances. She gravely informed me at the outset that she felt drawn to speak more freely on this subject to me than to any one else, because

of my strong friendship for Paul. I had made up my mind that she would next level her battery at Cousin Mary, when, much to my relief, our conversation was interrupted.

Later, while in the company of another of the guests, between whom and myself a silence of a few moments had fallen, I happened to overhear Miss Grubb mention my name to Ray, with whom she had now elected to converse. My ears gave quick attention ere I realized that I was listening, and I distinctly heard these words, uttered in her low, insinuating voice: —

"The conceited prig always had a fancy for his cousin's wife, — and now he has come, — who knows?"

What was this woman's purpose? — deliberately to inflame two men with anger against each other for the sake of amusement? When she first had imputed bad motives to Ray I felt a little uneasy, but not so now; nothing which such a woman might say was worthy of a serious thought.

Cousin Mary now went to the piano and sung for the company. She had always a beautiful voice, and it now seemed purer and richer than ever before, delighting the ear.

"It is wonderful how your voice has strengthened," I said, after the first song.

"I have been thinking," spoke up Ray, the conversation being now general, "that our sense of hearing must be keener here than in the world."

"Undoubtedly, and the pleasure we derive from beautiful sounds is therefore more intense," I re-

joined. "If we are conscious of this here, imagine what our delight in music will be in heaven; it will stir our very souls."

"I have sometimes wondered if I should have a piano there," mused Cousin Mary, after a pause, during which she struck a few chords.

"You will have something much better than a piano," said Ray, with a smile and a flash of the eye.

"Do you mean a violin or a harp?" asked one of the guests, half seriously.

"Oh, no! — some soul-thrilling, heavenly instrument not known to us."

The conversation was interrupted here by Paul, who desired his wife to play a certain composition which was a favorite with him. Miss Grubb earnestly seconded his request, evidently desirous to have an end of general conversation, and resume her *tête à tête* with Ray.

When my cousin's wife had finally left the piano, and the opportunity offered, I said: "What do you think of Miss Isabella Grubb?"

"What do *you* think of her?" she rejoined, evasively, her eyes wavering.

"To put it bluntly," I said, "I think she is a malicious slanderer, — a liar."

My cousin's wife looked deep into my eyes for some moments ere she replied: "I am glad; I knew that you would read her character." Then, after a moment, "Oh, what have I not endured from that woman!"

"I pity her when she comes into the state of her interiors, and can no longer wear a mask," I said.

"I know some one whose case will be even more pitiable when the mask is torn away," said my companion, deliberately, a look of cold repugnance deepening in her eyes; "I know some one who is yet more a hypocrite and a liar, if that be possible!"

Looking searchingly into her face for a moment, I cried out softly, "Oh, Cousin Mary!"

XII.

SET FREE.

She said no more, and I asked no questions; but I knew perfectly well that my Cousin Mary referred to her husband. I was thunderstruck. What could she mean? I did not question her sincerity; she was a good woman, and would not lie. But what could explain the violence of her feeling toward a man so blameless as her husband uniformly appeared to be? I quickly made up my mind that the mischief-making Miss Grubb was responsible, and then, upon reflection, concluded not to make up my mind at all, and to await developments.

For days I scarcely did anything but visit the house and reflect upon the deplorable situation. All interest in my own affairs for the time was lost in my affection for Paul and concern for his welfare. I forgot that they were in the hands of the Divine Providence, and set before myself the delicate task of healing the breach between husband and wife. I conceived that the first thing to be done was to lay bare the probable exciting cause of this mischief, and therefore all the comings-out and goings-in of Miss Isabella Grubb were subjected to the most searching scrutiny. The woman became a curious and interesting study, and gradually I was able in

the light of her present to read her past. It became clear to me that she had early developed into a designing flatterer, a cringing hanger on. Alone in the world, out in the cold, she had allowed herself to feed upon envy, and had determined to win a corner in some warm nest by the easiest means. Being without influence or position of her own, she must contrive to bask in the sunshine radiating from the influence and position of others. Hypocrisy was her easiest means; where she might inwardly hate, she outwardly loved, and though her heart might be hot with rage, she yet made her smooth speeches and smiled her sweet smile. The sycophant of Greece and Rome is not extinct; the species may still be found seated in a reverential circle around all of the rich or otherwise powerful. "But smile on us," the attitude seems to say, "and we will burn incense to you before all men." Intoxicated by the smoking incense, my lord shuts his inner sight, smiles upon him who swings the censer, and calls him friend.

Miss Grubb had long burned incense to my cousin, and did so still. She had thus wormed herself deeply into his affections, while she on her side appeared to love and reverence him above all men — in a proper and maidenly way. But whether she cherished any real affection for him was uncertain, for it was impossible, even in a general way, to judge such a woman's motives from her actions. Let this be as it might, I held to the idea that she was responsible for the trouble between husband and wife, and that, if I could but unmask her before them both, the

breach might be healed. I did not know that the breach was a chasm, a great, impassable gulf. Had I known, I should not have been taken so greatly by surprise when, in the end, the matter was lifted out of my puny hands and settled in a way which I could never have foreseen.

I happened one day to stop at my cousin's house early in the afternoon, and, being told by the servant that his master was out and that his mistress was lying down, I directed that the latter be not disturbed, and said that I would wait. At one end of the drawing-room there was a small alcove or bay window, partly concealed by heavy curtains. Here, while resting on a soft, low lounge, I fell asleep. Sometime later I was awakened by the sound of excited, angry voices in the room.

"I *never* loved you," my Cousin Paul was saying, bitterly; "I married you for your money."

"I know it,—have long known it," was the reply, spoken in the voice of his wife.

I rose noisily to acquaint them of my presence; but they were too preoccupied to take note of any sound, however significant. Between the curtains I saw that they were facing each other on their feet in the middle of the room,—the husband in a fury, his face expressive of the deepest hatred; the wife, who was on the defensive, the picture of indignation, but self-possessed.

"I know it," she repeated, in low, deliberate tones. "I long ago saw through your mask."

"And I saw through yours. You pretended to the world that you loved me, but you married me only

out of pique. You became convinced that your lovely, lovelorn Ray coveted your money, not you: that was the whole of it."

"This is not true."

"Why, then, did you marry me?"

"I will tell you," she answered, her flashing eyes full upon him. "After you cunningly and successfully slandered the man I loved, compelling me against my will to believe in your 'proofs' of his perfidy, I was still blind enough to regard you as a man of honor and truth, and in the greatness of my loneliness and misery I began to imagine that I loved *you.* Will you deny this?"

My cousin leaned suddenly forward with uplifted hand, and, ere I could stir, I heard the sound of a blow, and knew that he had struck his wife. With a low cry of horror rather than of pain, she sank into a chair and remained motionless. It was then that I heard a woman's cruel laugh, and taking a step forward, saw Miss Grubb seated calmly on a sofa a few feet away.

My first impulse was to spring into the room and knock my cousin down, and had he attempted to strike again it would have been the worse for him. He made no such attempt. He had scarcely dropped his uplifted hand to his side when there came the sound of a loud, resounding knock on the outer door of the house, and after an interval of a few seconds the unexpected visitor entered the drawing-room, — a tall, well-built man of a pleasing countenance, dressed in a uniform of pale blue. I knew him at once to be one of the city guards, for I had seen his

like before a few times. From Alaric and others I had heard that no one seemed to know where was the headquarters of these guards, or to be able to calculate their comings and goings. They did not stand in the streets on the watch, but kept out of sight and appeared only when there was disturbance. What was more curious still, so far as any one knew, they came without being sent for, as had been the case when the three white-clothed men suddenly appeared and quelled the disturbance in the church. These latter, however, appeared to belong to a distinct order, the representatives of which were still more rarely seen.

"What do you want?" asked my cousin, in a tone of great surprise and annoyance, staring blankly at the newcomer.

"I come to inquire into this disturbance," was the prompt reply, as the guard advanced a few feet into the room.

"What disturbance?" demanded Paul, angrily. "Who told you there was a disturbance?"

"I come by order of the governor of the city," answered the guard, calmly.

"Does the governor of the city keep a spy in my house in order to be informed in case I should choose to quarrel with my cook?" was the insolent rejoinder.

"Our governor does not need to keep spies," replied the guard, with the same calmness and dignity. "He is kept informed in a surer way. He acts under orders from heaven."

Then, turning to Cousin Mary, whose eyes seemed

to rest on him with feverish expectancy, he continued: "The cry of this woman, once your wife, has been heard, and it is ordered that she now be released, if such be her will. The time is ripe for your separation. Tell me, woman, do you love the bonds which bind you to this man? Speak the truth fearlessly."

My cousin's wife rose slowly to her feet, her eyes still more intent upon the face of the guard; she hesitated, as if to weigh her words well.

"I loathe them," she said at last, in a low, distinct voice.

"Then from this day henceforth they are loosed. From this day you are set free."

"Set free!" the flash in her eye seemed to say exultantly, yet my Cousin Mary's face wore an incredulous look, like that of one unable to believe in some unexpected great good fortune. Her eyes travelled slowly and apprehensively from one to another of those in the room.

"And may — may I leave this house?" she inquired, at last.

"At once, if it be your will. It is so ordered, and you need have no fear," was the answer. "Is there some friend whose protection you would like to ask, or will you go with me to the palace of the governor, there to wait until a suitable home is assigned to you?"

"I should like" — she trembled and hesitated — "I should like to go to the house of — of my Uncle Arthur."

Only her Uncle Arthur! Those flashing eyes,

those trembling eyelids, those faltering words — none of this was occasioned by the thought of Edward Ray, as I had been too ready to conclude. This was well. This uncle was dear to her, as I had known long ago, — long before any of us had passed from the natural world; he was an upright man, and his house was the place for her.

"You may call him, then," the guard had said.

"How 'call him'?" faltered Cousin Mary. "He does not live near us."

"Think of him intently, earnestly desiring his presence, and I promise you he will come," was the confident answer.

There was then a strange, expectant silence, as she quietly obeyed. Meanwhile, my eyes wandered from one to another of those in the room. The guard wore the calm, confident air of the official who knows that, come what may, authority is behind him, added to which was the kindly expression of the man who takes delight in the happiness of others. My Cousin Mary was now flushed with excitement, and I noted a slight trembling of the hands and lips; but from the expression of her lovely eyes it was clear that she was profoundly calm within. What mattered anything now, — now that she was set free. No less happy in her own way perhaps was Miss Grubb. It was with difficulty that she kept her seat; she seemed scarcely able to restrain herself from a violent exhibition of exultation. At one moment a cunning self-satisfied smile would break over her face; at another, triumph, scorn, malignance, would be mirrored in her eyes as they rested on my Cousin Mary.

Paul, too, seemed glad; but his joy was tempered by anger; he still stood upon his feet and looked threateningly at the guard.

I had barely made this survey when there came the sound of a knock on the outer door, and a moment later a voice was heard in the hall. With a low, glad cry, my Cousin Mary ran from the room and met her uncle without.

"I was walking in the street," I heard him say, "and all at once felt strongly impressed that you were in need of me."

"I am to go home with you," she said, and in the stillness I heard her kiss him.

She did not return to the drawing-room. The guard joined them in the hall, and the three left the house together. A day or two later I saw my Cousin Mary in her uncle's home. Long afterward I saw her in her final home, and her companion in this last was not her uncle, but Edward Ray. And they were among the good.

"I thank you!" cried Paul, ere the guard had gone. "I am in your debt," — with a mock air of gratitude. "You have rid me of an encumbrance and set *me* free." He put his arm round Miss Grubb, who had risen with a flushed face. "*She* will be my wife now," — looking at her fondly; "she will now rule in my house as she has always ruled in my heart."

"You are free to take her if she be willing," returned the guard, "but you cannot remain here with her. You both have now come into a new state, and you must move onward in the direction of your final place."

He then turned away with a courteous salute and left the room. I was so overcome with surprise and concern that I stood motionless, although my impulse was to rush to my cousin's side, and ask for an explanation of the strange things which I had heard and seen; and while I hesitated, in company with the woman he left the room, neither aware of my presence. It seemed to me that they had not heeded the last words of the guard, being absorbed in the expression of their now unchecked affection. Like one in a dream, I crossed the drawing-room, quietly let myself out of the house, and in a state of great mental bewilderment walked the street several hours. I felt an intolerable pain at my heart as I reviewed my cousin's action. Paul, my beloved cousin, had acted not only with dishonor but brutally. What a change! — how unlike his former self! Could it be that hitherto I had seen only the outside, only the fair mask of an interiorly wicked heart? Oh, no, no! It could not be. His passions were inflamed; he was misguided, influenced by a wicked woman, but assuredly he was not interiorly wicked himself.

At last I retraced my steps and re-entered the house. The servant showed me into the drawing-room, and after a few minutes my cousin appeared. As he grasped my hand, and the old familiar smile played over his face, I felt that I might take hope. But his first words brought back the pain at my heart and struck me dumb.

"What do you suppose?" he began. "My wife has eloped with that scoundrel, Ray. She pre-

tended to be going to her uncle's, but I understand it all. Don't pity me," he quickly added. "I am willing enough to be rid of her. I can find another wife, as you will see, who is much more to my mind."

"What did I tell you?" demanded Miss Grubb, triumphantly, for she too had now entered the room.

I quickly averted my glance from her face, and addressed myself to Paul during the ensuing half-hour, endeavoring to turn the conversation into serious channels; I spoke of honor, truth, justice, heaven. But he was not interested; he openly showed that he was bored, presently yawning in my face. So at last I rose and took my leave.

Clearly my cousin was changed, — was altogether other than I had believed him to be. His wife — she who was once his wife — had spoken the truth. Should I not, then, stifle my affection for him and go near him no more? Had I not so advised the unhappy Alaric? The thought was at first intolerable. No, not yet. I could not desert him yet. It might be that, after all, he was not interiorly evil. Who could tell? It might be that he had only been led into evil by the evil woman now with him. I would therefore go to him once again and reason with him, and in the end I might be the means of rescuing him from so unfortunate an entanglement.

But when I sought him at his house on the following day, I found all the doors and windows shut close, and there was no answer to my knock. The very house seemed changed; and, reflecting upon

this afterward, I could not feel absolutely sure that it was the same place. As I turned sadly away, the last words spoken by the guard recurred to me: —

"You are free to take her if she be willing, but you cannot remain here with her. You both have now come into a new state, and you must move onward in the direction of your final place."

XIII.

FOLLOWING THE DOWNWARD DRIFT.

My cousin had been sent away, then, the house being no longer in correspondence with his state. Ah, it was too true! — it must indeed be true; he had now come into the state of his interiors, and the real man stood confessed. Was he still in Newcomers, or had he moved forward to another community? During several days I earnestly sought an answer to this question, wandering about the city in the hope of finding him established in another house there. But all in vain.

Had I dismissed him from my mind and gone about my affairs, I might have been spared much suffering, sorrow, and shame; but I was still infatuated with the thought that I might rescue him, and longed to see him again. And my wish was granted. While out walking some ten days later, thinking intently about my cousin, some strange, almost imperceptible attraction led me far beyond the city limits, and downward over a long gradual slope into a valley. Here, in an extremely barren district, divided between bare sandy soil and low bottoms filled with bogs and stagnant pools, I discovered a number of rude shanties or huts built of sticks and clay, and arranged in straggling rows with irregular streets between.

Wherefore had I been drawn to this place, — this worse than desert? Could he have found his new home *here?* At length I paused before one of the larger houses, over the entrance to which was the inscription "Sunday School." My Cousin Paul had ever been devoted to the Sunday school, and this ought, therefore, to be the place in which to look for him. Having entered the house, I immediately discovered him, for he was on the rostrum speaking, just as I had often seen him do during our natural lives. But the manner and the matter of his speech were now widely different. On a bench at his right sat Miss Grubb, and in front some twenty or thirty people, nearly filling the small, ugly interior. I entered on tiptoe, and sat down quietly near the door.

"In most Sunday schools and churches," my cousin was saying, "a great deal is made of the pretended fact that Christ rose from the dead; but outside of a few simple-minded and imaginative persons no one really believes it. It is merely the fashion to make much of this mystical old legend because our forefathers believed in it, and because it is supposed to act as a restraining force on the vulgar. This is the whole of the matter. Nowadays, when we say that Christ rose from the dead, we mean no more than when we say that Pallas Athené leaped forth a full-grown goddess from the head of Zeus, who was at once her father and her mother.

"But in our little circle here we are all more or less of one mind, and do not need to say what we do not mean. Let us call things by their right names.

As a matter of fact, Christ did not rise from the dead. Such an occurrence contradicts all known human experience, and must be supported by a tremendous amount of evidence or it cannot be believed. The evidence is not forthcoming. It is best that we look this fact in the face. It is perfectly safe to say that there can be no future life. Is there any reason to believe that a man can think who has no brain? Well, a dead person has no brain, for his whole body has mouldered away to dust. Can we conceive of a person living and performing the functions of life without eyes, nose, mouth, ears, and other sense organs? Well, a dead person has no sense organs. How can there be thought and life when the brain and body have been destroyed? It is utterly impossible. And of what consequence is it to us whether Christ rose from the dead or not? It is just as hard to make a living, and just as easy to be happy, whether He did or not. Everything goes on just the same; men work, and women weep, and children die. On every side the fairest flowers are cut down in their prime; the pitiless and inexplicable decrees of fate continue to fill us with grief and rage just the same. The malign and remorseless monster, Death, continues to roam abroad, daily transforming mirth into despair. Without even a warning, we are arrested, imprisoned, flung into the nameless darkness beyond the tomb within the lapse of a few hours. A God who can do nothing might just as well not exist."

There was much more in the same strain before the speaker of these vile words sat down. When he

had finished, the listeners rose and filed past me out of the house. I did not like their faces, and shuddered as I looked at them; they were all bad — bad.

"What an excellent address!" some of them were saying.

"Horrible — horrible!" I muttered, as my glance returned to my cousin, who now stood on the rostrum with the woman.

Alas! of what avail could be my words if I should speak to him now? He was past all persuasion. "Let me then no longer indulge in a vain and foolish hope," was my thought. "Let me not remain a moment longer exposed to the diabolical influences of this community." I was in the act of rising, intending quietly to leave the house and hurry away, when my cousin saw, recognized, and smiled at me. This was more than I could resist; the old fascination seized me, and I walked forward to meet him. However, I was still very unhappy, and, after he had shaken my hand, I could not bring myself to do more than nod distantly to the woman at his side.

"What are you doing in this dreadful place, Paul?" I asked, with sadness. "Who could have believed that you would ever stand up and utter such atrocious sentiments!"

The grief displayed in my tone and manner wrought on him, and seemed for a moment to draw him back to his former state; he looked startled — like one caught in a disgraceful action.

"Well, you see," he stammered, "they won't listen to the old orthodox way of putting it any more, and

I must contrive to interest them. It is the only way of gaining an influence over them."

"Worse and worse," I groaned.

Then his manner changed. "After all, I spoke only the truth," he said decisively. "It is really what I always believed in my inmost thoughts."

"O Paul, Paul," I broke in, in an agony of pain, "have you forgotten that we are in the spiritual world? Listen to me: we are now in the spiritual world, and you stand on the very brink of hell."

He laughed aloud and answered flippantly: "Your mind has been abused, my poor cousin. I'll soon convert you from such folly."

It was useless, and I said no more. They led me out, and along the wretched street to their home, — a miserable shanty of two rooms, meanly furnished. "To think of your choosing this place!" I exclaimed, looking about. "It is horrible."

"Well, it might be better, of course," said Paul, with a careless shrug; "but really it is not so bad. You surprise me."

Clearly, he did not see even external objects as I saw them, — my poor lost Paul! His woman presently called him into the other room, and I could hear her talking bitterly. No words were distinguishable, but I well knew that she was abusing me. I felt that I could breathe more freely outside, and accordingly left the house. As I strolled away a few steps, I heard Paul's voice, and, looking over my shoulder, saw him standing in the doorway.

"That's right," he called out; "take a walk down by the lake. I'll join you presently."

The lake! Those noisome bogs and stagnant pools a lake. Alas! he was mad — with that incurable madness which is born of evil. The words of the angel Ariel recurred to me, — words which were, in substance, that in the spiritual world only those who tend downward to hell are insane, and only the good are truly in their right minds. I did not turn my steps toward the "lake," but walked slowly to the extremity of the village, gazing curiously at the low-browed, repulsive men and women as they went in and out of their houses. It seemed unquestionable that the place was on the very borders of hell. How could these people develop a more evil expression than was already theirs? My cousin's face was more agreeable to my eye than any I saw, but even his now wore a hardened look which suggested that of a criminal, while the appearance of his woman was in every way revolting.

On the outskirts of the village I seated myself on the rotten stump of a tree, uncertain what to do. It was already late, and when I rose to retrace my steps it was growing dark. Glancing toward the region of the stagnant pools and bogs, I beheld, first one, then another, and finally a dozen or more wavering phosphorescent lights floating over it. They did not burn steadily, but came and went in a fitful, uncertain way. "How well these false, treacherous stars correspond to the false beliefs, the fatuous imaginings, of the wretched people of this region," was my thought, turning toward the village. Deep darkness had now settled upon the ground, and but for the faint light shining through chinks in

the walls the huts would scarcely have been outlined in the gloom.

As I entered what I supposed to be the main avenue, the dark figure of a man rose before me.

"Who are you?" he demanded, roughly.

"Who are *you?*" I rejoined, mildly.

"I am a king," was the proud reply.

"Good night, your majesty," I said, passing on.

"Stop a minute," he cried, following me. "What are your ideas about government? What government do you prefer?"

"I lived under a limited monarchy in the natural world," I said, after a moment of hesitation. "I liked it well enough."

"We have a democracy here,—a glorious democracy. We tolerate nothing else," he rejoined, with a certain combative enthusiasm.

"But I thought you said you were a king."

"So I am. We are all kings here,—all free and independent sovereigns."

"It strikes me that that is a very cheap sort of royalty."

"But you see," he eagerly explained, "while we are all kings, one of us is a king of kings. I speak of myself. I am an emperor."

"Ah! I see. But what becomes of your 'glorious democracy'?"

At this he flew into an unaccountable passion and began to abuse me, wherefore I turned and walked quickly away. A little farther on another dark figure rose before me and demanded to know who I was.

"I am an ordinary person," I said. "I suppose *you* are a king."

"In one sense, yes," was the answer.

"There seem to be a good many kings about here," I remarked, irreverently adding, "A pretty democracy this."

"But *they* are only kings of the ordinary type," was the disdainful reply. "*I* am a spiritual king. I am the Pope."

I was moving forward with a parting salute, but this "pope" ran after me with less dignity than haste: "Hold on; I will tell you a secret," he whispered mysteriously; "I am more than a mere pope. I am a pope of popes. I am the acknowledged lord of all the popes who have lived since St. Peter first turned over the keys."

"Good night, your high mightiness," I said, and slipped sway.

A few minutes later I realized that I was lost. Where my cousin's house now might be I could not tell. As I halted, looking from side to side, a third dark figure, this time that of a woman, approached me. As soon as she began to speak I recognized Miss Grubb. Without waiting to inquire my name or my errand, she burst into a tirade against my cousin, claiming that he had been beating her without cause, and heaping abuse upon him in the most violent terms. It seemed to be a matter of no concern whether she knew or did not know the person to whom she delivered herself, if only she could vent her rage. I said nothing in reply, and after a moment turned and walked away; observing that

she persistently followed me, I began to run and soon eluded her.

I now approached a house to make inquiries, but the sound of quarrelling and fighting within caused me to halt and then pass on to another. Here, as there was no answer to repeated knocks, and as light shone through large chinks in the side of the hut, I felt justified in applying my eyes to one of them and examining the interior. All that I could see was a man, old and gray, seated on a bench, with his elbows resting on a bare table before him, upon which stood a smoking candle. In the dim light it could be seen that his face wore a cunning, infatuated smile, and that his fixed, glassy eyes hung rapturously upon some object between him and the candle. What this object was I could not well make out until the man touched it caressingly with his hands, and the clink of silver or gold was heard. Then it was clear to me that the precious object was a pile of money, or what was believed to be such, and that he who gazed upon it so lovingly was the immortal spirit of an earthly miser. I knocked loudly on the wall, at the same time calling out; but in his insane rapture the man appeared to be deaf to everything.

"Here is one more example," I reflected, turning away, "of how the ruling love of every creature follows him into eternal life."

Later, I approached, and knocked at a neighboring house. Without delay the door was partly opened, and the heads of two men and a woman were thrust out, one after another. Their faces, which were

outlined in the dim light from the interior, were so evil and malevolent that, had I not been seen, I should have turned away without speaking. There was now nothing else to be done, and I called to them, inquiring the way to my cousin's house.

"What did you say?" asked one of them, sullenly. He did not have the manner of a deaf person, and I knew that he had heard me perfectly.

"He is a stranger," said the woman, with a cunning smile.

"Let us knock him down and rob him," whispered the other man.

I turned abruptly and hurried away, prudently looking over my shoulder; and when I saw them rush out after me, I began to run swiftly, and so escaped them. I ran until I found myself in front of the "Sunday School," which was recognized with a sense of relief. Now it would not be difficult to find my cousin's house. Observing that the door was open and the interior dimly lighted, I stepped forward and looked in, wondering that, instead of the voice of a single speaker, I heard a confused medley of sounds. For one minute, I stood staring, then turned away in horror. There is a limit beyond which it is not well to go, and what I saw in the "Sunday School" by night will not be recorded here.

Arriving shortly at what was supposed to be my cousin's house, I was about to knock, when a sudden suggestion of prudence arrested my hand. Suppose it were not the place? My last experience had made me apprehensive. After a moment, I con-

cluded to look through a chink before knocking, and it was well that this was done. Applying my eye to the hole through which light penetrated, I at first saw only the outlined figures of a man and woman seated on a bench before an open fireplace which was duskily lighted by a few burning coals. The woman's face was turned directly toward me, and gradually I made out a pair of bold, starting eyes which were strangely familiar. A moment later, I recognized my cousin's woman, and by this time I was also aware that she and the man close at her side (who was *not* my cousin) were caressing each other.

Turning away in disgust, I had scarcely taken ten steps when I ran against a man unawares. The shock of collision was quite as unpleasant to him as it was to me, to judge from the loud oath which he uttered. Immediately, I recognized Paul.

"I beg your pardon," I said, mildly. "Don't you know me?"

"Oh, it is you," he answered, after a moment spent in curbing his anger. "Where have you been? I could n't find you when I started out."

I told him that I had lost my way, and even now was uncertain where to find his house. I began to speak to him then, imploringly: —

"Paul, my dear cousin, come with me away from this horrible place. I cannot believe that you really are what you appear to be; you have been the victim of a bad influence, — you have been dragged down by that wicked woman; but there may yet be time. Why should you stay? That woman with

whom you are infatuated, — she is unfaithful. Listen to me, — she is not true to you."

He demanded to hear more, and I told him what I had seen in the house near which we stood. Uttering frightful oaths, he turned and hurried toward the place. Instead of following him, I moved yet farther away, halting anon to listen as the sound of a door burst in from without was borne to me. This harsh sound was followed shortly by the noise incident upon a desperate fight, — now the fall of an overturned table, now a man's furious oath, now a woman's terrified scream. How long it lasted, I know not. Sick with horror, I stood still until the wretched woman limped past me, weeping and groaning. Hearing Paul's angry voice a few feet behind her, and dreading to meet him just now, I leaped backward out of sight, and so avoided him.

A short while later, as I stood in the same neighborhood, doubtful what to do, two dark figures rushed past me and accosted a third in my hearing, "Where is that man who dares to criticise our form of government?" they shouted, in a fury; and I recognized the voices of the two "kings," or rather of the "emperor" and the "lord of the popes." Far from informing them of my whereabouts, I stepped quickly out of their way and withdrew from the neighborhood. The night was full of dangers. I dared not trust myself even in the house of my cousin, and concluded to remain out of doors, protected by the cloak of darkness and the possibility of shifting my position at will.

Ah, that night of terrors! of continuing alarms!

Once I saw a door open, and in the dim light recognized a face which caused my heart to stand still. The face of Downing, — Downing, the evil spirit who weeks ago had enticed me into the pseudo-paradise. He was *here.* Was this his camping-ground, and was I, then, in hell? For an hour I paced restlessly about, praying for deliverance from my position; but there was no change. If any, the night and gloom thickened; the streets were still crowded with unseen dangers, — an oath here, a blow there, emphasized by a cry of pain, hoarse or shrill according to the sex of the victim; and now and again a frail hut trembled with the force of some fierce struggle within. Was this a deep and black temptation which would end anon, or was I lost? O Heaven! was I lost?

Even as I put this question, dark figures, only half outlined, started up about me, and seemed to listen with bent heads to every thought throbbing within my brain; sometimes surrounding me as if to shut out all escape; sometimes crowding near in broken groups and pointing at me, while whispering and laughing softly, derisively. In agony I prayed until I could no longer pray to be set free from the devilish crew which seemed to beset me. But I was not set free, and I thought that I should die, — my immortal spirit could not live on through such soul-freezing terrors.

"We know you," these crowding shadows seemed to say with glee. "We have heard you pretend to yourself that you are good, and we have laughed. You feed upon the recollection of good deeds done,

but your good deeds, like ours, were ever the offspring of selfish aims. We tell you it is vain to deceive yourself, for deep down in your heart we see the shape of the cloven foot. We recognize you as one of us. You may struggle, you may writhe, but it is too late. This is hell, and you cannot escape."

I shut my ears with my hands; I bowed myself to the earth and strove to lift my thoughts to heaven. I could not pray; a cold, determined, remorseless hand seemed to clutch my brain. The shadow of hell's night was over me; the thick curdling darkness was a monster with a thousand snaky arms which pinned me down. Too late, — too late; all was over.

"Oh, let me not give up!" rose a faint cry within me at last. "My heart is dead, and prayer is not for me, but let me lift my soul upward through the dark a little way. Let me, in this tempest, fix my thoughts upon that Sun of heaven which I know forever rides serene above all clouds. Fell spirits hot from depths of hell may tempt with poisoned words, may drown the earth in deathly gloom, may shadow all my soul with night, but still mayhap one ray from that bright Sun will filter down to me. . . . Give up? Once and forever, no! The crowding troop of devils may pile their shadows to the sky, but cannot shut me from that single ray!"

. . . I became aware that the morning was breaking, that darkness was receding; the objects of the neighborhood were being dimly outlined. And that which tortured me was gone from before my eyes, — the black horror was lifted from my soul.

XIV.

THE METAMORPHOSIS.

But, after all, the day did not really break. The heavy darkness was only replaced by a gray twilight, resembling that which shadows the earth when the sun is eclipsed. Yet even so much was a blessed relief. Beginning now to feel more hopeful, I realized that I was not as fatigued physically as I had believed; the misery of body was largely the result of mental torment. After some little time for reflection, I repaired to my cousin's house, determined to reason with him once more, and then take leave of him forever. I found him sitting in his doorway smoking a dirty clay pipe and gazing out toward the stagnant pools and bogs. As his features were now more and more clearly outlined, it was impossible not to contrast the coarseness of his face and the evil look in his eye with the refined and amiable expression worn by him in the world.

"He is lost, lost," I told myself, as I approached, watching him. "But I will speak with him once more. What a dismal morning!" I said, addressing him.

He looked up absently out of the corner of his eye, — almost as if he did not know me.

"I never saw a finer morning," he rejoined, after a moment.

"How is your —" I could not bring myself to say "wife." "How is — she — this morning?" I asked, wondering if she had been disabled, and apprehensive lest any reference to her might anger him.

"She is inside," was his answer, without visible irritation.

A moment later I saw her, and she appeared to be none the worse for the beating she had received. She walked to the door, thrust her head out, and looked from side to side; then, after bestowing a malevolent glance upon me, retired from view.

I was now about to address myself to Paul, when I became conscious of a human presence just behind me, — a presence which in a moment began to afflict me with a deadly, suffocating pain. A quick glance over my shoulder showed me that a man had walked up close behind and stood there in silence, almost touching my clothing. Leaping forward with a cry of pain and fear, I faced him. With horror I then saw that it was Downing, and that he wore a cunning smile on his face. He seemed to gloat over me in my torture, and, with a low laugh which lived in my memory, he walked forward and disappeared through the door of my cousin's house.

"Paul! Paul! do you know that man?" I cried, in great agitation, now relieved of that intolerable pain.

"Of course I do," was the answer; "he is a very good friend of mine."

"He is an evil spirit, — a devil!" I cried.

My cousin laughed aloud. "How you amuse me!" he said.

It would have been well had I turned away at once and sought my own safety; instead, I halted once more to implore Paul to save himself by retreat from this evil community on the confines of hell.

"It is time to stop this nonsense," the man cried, suddenly, starting up. "You are incorrigible; you are mad. To your eyes everything is distorted, — you talk like a fool!"

"O Paul, Paul!" I cried, in despair.

"I don't acknowledge that name," he rejoined, in great anger, and with a wildness of the eye. "I know no such name. I am unnamable. Do you know why?"

"I certainly do not."

"I will tell you; I am a god."

I started back with an exclamation of horror.

"Yes, I am a god, and you know it. Go down on your knees and worship me, you miserable wretch!"

Supreme horror made me calm. "A god indeed!" I said contemptuously. "*You* a god!"

"What!" he demanded, with the fury of insanity, "don't you see my crown of fire? Don't you see the lightning blazing in my hand?"

"I see a theatrical madman," I said.

"I 'll make you see it!" he yelled.

He leaped to the door of the hut, calling aloud, "Come out, come out!" And as Downing and the woman appeared, he shouted, "At him, both of

you! He says I 'm not a god, — he dares to say I 'm not a god! Do not spare him."

I turned to go, but they were too quick for me. My cousin and the woman placed themselves in front of me, and Downing came up behind. How the latter operated I could not tell, but my cousin and the woman seemed only to fasten their eyes and concentrate their thoughts upon me. Immediately I was afflicted with an internal torment such as cannot be described. I struggled against this determinedly, but the struggle only increased my agony. I thought I should suffocate, — fall dead. And then all at once I seemed to see what my cousin wished me to see, — a crown of fire upon his head, and flashing lightning in his right hand. Beyond him in the lowlands, where lay the stagnant pools and bogs, I seemed to see, even as he saw, a lake of pure water.

"Aha! you see it now," I heard him cry exultantly.

"Yes, I see it; but it is only lying phantasy," I answered, for I still resisted. "It is nothing but devilish magic."

Still battling, I fell down upon the ground and prayed aloud for deliverance from this hellish thraldom. Then they literally danced about me in the intensity of their efforts to bind me through magical arts. But I was delivered; in a moment I saw again with my own eyes.

"Hear him pray!" they had cried in derision; but as I rose to my feet they realized that a power superior to theirs had set me free, and their rage was terrible. With loud, mad curses, they redoubled

their efforts, running around me and scanning every limb and feature as though in search of some weak spot through which to strike. The internal torment, which had been lightened as I prayed, was now more than ever intensified.

"Kill the saint!" shouted Paul, with wild laughter.

"Torture him first!" cried Downing, hoarsely.

Then, as if by magic, the three possessed themselves with daggers and threatened me. In terror I broke from among them and ran, — ran blindly until I stood on the boundary of the stagnant pools and bogs. Close behind me they came, yelling like demons. I looked to the right and to the left; there was no escape. Once more I glanced backward at my pursuers, then plunged into the bog before me. I sank to my knees, — to my waist; but still struggled with the last energy of despair. I leaped upward and forward, and somehow made headway. But I gained nothing. They plunged into the mire after me and gained on me at once. They seemed to lie down and wallow in the mud, — to swim like fishes, — to slip over the surface of the bog like serpents. Did they imagine themselves to be swimming in the "lake"? Struggle as I might, I could not leave them behind; they were always there: on the right, on the left, behind, in front, threatening me with their daggers. Was this reality or a distorted dream? Turn where I would, with whatever speed, one of them was always before me, gliding like a serpent across my forward path and uttering mocking cries.

Why not give up? It was useless to prolong the agonizing struggle. . . . At last I passed the bog, then tore through the slime of a shallow stagnant pool; then came another bog, another slimy pool. . . . Why not subside beneath the yielding ooze and die? To live was torment intolerable.

Anon I struggled up a sandy incline and fled across a barren plain which seemed scorched by a torrid but invisible sun, and was strewn with cruel stones and thorny shrubs. Flee as I might, it still availed me nothing. Did I choose a route and bend my flying steps that way, from behind some shrub or stone along the path a figure would start up, — the figure of a dusky, hellish thing which mocked me in my agony; so would I be distracted from my course.

All hope of rescue was abandoned, and I told myself that I was being finally driven into hell. Still, on I went, till the sky was black and the ground was red before my eyes, — till the air seemed hot and charged with poison, — till my lungs failed me and I gasped for breath. So I ran blindly up to a perpendicular wall of rock, cutting off my own retreat. I heard the yells of the pursuers at my back, and knew that the end had come. I threw myself down on the earth, and ground my teeth against a stone. Let them come! let them come!

So they came. With derisive yells, with brandished daggers, they rushed upon me. I closed my eyes — and then, all in a moment, I felt safe. I knew that I was rescued. A heavenly presence

was at hand. Opening my eyes, I saw that an angel stood behind me; for from him radiated a soft, intense light, which fell across me toward my enemies, and from which they drew back in fear and hate. I clasped my arms about the angel's feet and held fast; I felt like one snatched in out of a wild, wild storm, — like one rescued from the jaws of death and drawn into an impregnable fortress of stone.

From my unshaken fortress I now looked forth upon my howling foes tormented with the sense of their powerlessness to do me hurt. A frightful change had come over them. Looked at through the heavenly light encompassing the guardian angel, they now appeared to be inhuman things, with the cloven feet and claws of beasts. The face of my cousin was dark, shapeless, hairy; that of the woman, hideous with warts and ulcers. The face of Downing was livid and corpse-like, and his eyes were of a dull red, like clots of blood. The bodies of all were monstrous.

And as I looked and saw these terrible things, all at once the perpendicular wall of rock was rent as though by an earthquake, disclosing a black, sooty cavern tending obliquely downward into unknown depths, out of which flowed forth dense smoke, as if from a subterranean fire, and a hot, noisome stream of air which filled me with nausea and loathing. But when it reached those evil ones they seemed entranced, leaping forward with every sign of joy, altogether forgetting me. With harsh, unearthly cries, but with manifest delight, they one after the other ran forward to

the mouth of the cavern and leaped headlong downward out of sight.

I closed my eyes that I might see no more, and then a darkness seemed to shut me in, to flood my mind, till the last spark of consciousness was extinct.

XV.

AT THE FEET OF ARIEL.

When I came to myself and opened my eyes I saw first of all the calm face of the angel Ariel. Then I became aware that I was in another place, upon a couch in a house, and that my clothing no longer showed the stains of the mud and slime from the bogs. Strange as it might seem, I felt tranquil in body and mind. I sat up, my eyes intently fixed on the angel; I forgot to greet him.

"Was it all a dream?" I asked.

"No, it was not a dream, although you have lately been asleep," was the quiet answer.

"Then they ran into that terrible pit and were killed?"

"Not at all. They alighted without even a shock. They were merely, of their own free will, leaping through one of the gateways of hell."

"But the smoke, — the fire?"

"There was no real fire. At a distance the hells seem to be on fire, but this is only an appearance from correspondence. What is called hell-fire is only the fire of self-love, of lust, of hate. The love of doing evil, — this is the fire which never dies, and is said to consume the wicked."

I hung upon his words. His face, his eyes, even more than the words from his mouth (which I but

imperfectly recall), seemed to illumine my mind. "Ah, now I understand," I said, feeling joy in the thought that a great and hidden truth was made clear to me. "What dreadful monsters they were!" I added, after a moment, with sadness.

"They are such in the light of heaven," was the reply, "but in their own light they appear otherwise. It is of the mercy of the Lord that they should not see their own deformity, and they therefore appear to themselves and to one another as more or less perfect men. Nor does hell seem dark and gloomy to them, for, on account of their inverted state, everything that is really ugly and repulsive appears to their eyes beautiful. This is because they love evil, and not good. They live in communities similar to that which you have lately seen on the confines of hell, and are happier there than they could be anywhere else, because they there have opportunity to ultimate their evil lusts."

"But do they not suffer torment?"

"Bitter torment, — which the commission of evil inevitably entails. Were it not so, the wicked could not be restrained within bounds. It is of the mercy of the Lord that a certain order should rule even in the hells, and therefore the devils are compelled to labor for their daily bread, and are not allowed to do all the wicked things which they long to do. Hence they are tormented. But since what one loves is one's very life, a limited indulgence in their evil lusts is permitted the infernals, for otherwise they would be deprived of existence itself."

"Poor Paul, poor lost Paul," I mused later, tears in my eyes.

"Do not grieve for him," said the angel; "he has gone where he can enter more fully into the delight of his life than he could elsewhere."

"It is so hard to think of him — down there," I insisted, shuddering. "He always seemed so kind, so good."

"And yet his every act in latter years was dictated by selfish motives. He was kind solely to gain influence; he wished to rule others for his own selfish ends. A good action, done for its own sake without hope of reward, was to his mind consummate folly. Such a man loves neither the Church, his country, the public good, his neighbor, nor anything but himself alone; he therefore becomes, not an angel, but a devil."

"He always seemed so just," I added, clingingly. "I remember when he had some public offices at his disposal, disgusted with the favor shown their relatives by other men in high places, he refused even to consider the claims of those akin to him, and was publicly applauded."

"But this was not justice," was the convincing answer; "we are to love and do charity to our neighbor according to the good that is in him, and those akin to us by blood are our neighbors, not more, not less, but equally with others. In this case it was a question of fitness for the positions, and this man undoubtedly saw among his relations some well fitted to do the duties in question, but in order to gain glory for himself he was unjust to them."

"You speak positively —"

"I do. I was present when he was explored as to his interior quality, and I know the man."

"How 'explored'?"

"When one has been in the world of spirits some time," the angel explained, "he is let into the state of his interiors. He is then examined or explored as to his real quality. His book of life is read; that is to say, a certain influence is brought to bear, under which his natural memory is excited into activity, and he recalls the evils done in the body. These are reviewed by the angel examiners as they pass through his mind. He is then condemned, not for past commission of evils, but for his present attitude toward them. Those who are past redemption are observed to be delighted with the recollection of their evil deeds, but those who can be saved are seen to be bowed with humiliation and sorrow. This man who was akin to you through the natural tie of blood, far from showing remorse, furnished unmistakable evidence of intense exultation when the record of the evil cunning, hypocrisy, and secret wickeduess of his life passed before him."

Notwithstanding what I now heard, and all that I had seen and been taught, I presently found myself asking a foolish question. I made inquiry if the Lord, in His Infinite mercy, could not save a wicked man in spite of himself.

"The Lord does not disrupt the eternal laws of order, and change a hawk into a dove, or a wolf into a lamb," was the quick answer. "It is of His will and mercy that man be placed in the natural world

in equilibrium between good and evil, free to choose the one or the other. Were man compelled to choose the good, the godlike gift of freedom would be taken away from him, and he would be no longer a man, but a mere automaton. The whole design of creation, which is a heaven from the human race, would be frustrated. It is better that vast numbers should become devils than that all should be lifeless automata, and indeed it is far better to live and become a devil than not to live at all; for even the devils, tormented as they are, find a joy in existence, and have their own evil delights and pleasures.

"To understand how impossible it is for man to enter heaven simply through an act of mercy, you must understand that the loving and doing of good or evil affect the very substance and structure of one's soul. This is why the evil are inwardly delighted when they perceive the foul exhalations from hell, and gladly cast themselves downward through the way opened to them. Were this man of whom we have spoken elevated into heaven, he would be unable to breathe, like a fish out of water; he would be unable to endure the atmosphere in which the angels live, and would suffer unspeakable torment. I have seen some who believed themselves worthy of heaven so affected. It having been permitted them to approach a heavenly society, they were seized with horrible pains, and fell down as if dead, and as soon as the heavenly atmosphere was withdrawn from them and they revived, they ran away with shrieks of terror, and gladly cast themselves down to their own place."

Before the angel left me I asked a question concerning the Lord. Does the Lord God of heaven and earth live as a king among the angels, or is He still in a place or plane above them? — was a question which had many times occurred to me, and I now sought the answer.

"The highest of the angels are infinitely below the Lord," said Ariel; "He dwells infinitely above them, and is perceived by the superior angels as a glorious Sun, and by those respectively inferior as a resplendent Moon. Were He to come down in all His glory to dwell among them, they would be blinded, — yea, destroyed. Therefore even in the heavens the Lord is still above, and the angels do not worship Him face to face, but in temples, similarly as on earth. But there are times when He is pleased to, as it were, recede behind a veil, to descend, and to appear among the angels as a glorious Divine Man, so accommodated to their states as neither to blind nor otherwise do them harm. At such times the whole heavens, from end to end, are glorified; a transcendent light of a wondrously beautiful and varied coloring rests upon everything, and the angels are filled with indescribable happiness."

"And have you thus seen Him?" I asked, in awe.

"I have thus seen Him, and all my heart went out to Him in love and adoration; I wept tears of joy. Trembling with rapture, we sang the song of thanksgiving; and as He came near, we fell prostrate on our faces before Him. He looked on all; He deigned to look upon each and all as He passed

by, — even upon me. As I, with a confidence that was given me, met His benignant, loving gaze, I felt that the light of His Divine wisdom penetrated and illumined my mind, and that the warmth of His Divine love vivified my soul. I felt that I was blessed forevermore, for I had looked on the Source of life, and I now lived."

The angel's voice was low and sweet, and full of deepest reverence.

"Tell me how He looked, O my friend," I almost whispered. "The picture before my mind is indistinct, confused. Describe Him, — tell me all that one so unworthy as I may be permitted to know."

"He wore a flowing robe of imperial purple, which blazed with light as if from flame, and there was upon His head a crown of what seemed living stars. And His face — how shall I speak of that face clothed in Divine majesty and glory? I could see it, and again I could not see it. It was as if all the glory and light and beauty of the universal heaven were centred there as in their fountain head; and yet there was an indescribable softness over all, and no one was blinded. Truly he was God, but at the same time Man, — the great Creator in the glorified Human of the Lord the Saviour. I have heard angels who lived as men on earth at the time when He appeared there clothed in the flesh say that when they saw Him now they recognized Him as the same, — the very same."

As I heard this, words from the holy Book given to men on earth arose to view in my memory, —

these words from the relation of the Lord's transfiguration on the mountain: —

"And His face did shine as the sun and His raiment was white as the light."

And these words from the Apocalypse, where John is telling of the revelation of the Lord to him in the island of Patmos: —

"And I saw one like unto the Son of Man clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. And His head and hairs white like wool, like snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire. And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice like the voice of many waters. . . . And His face like the sun shining in its power. And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as if dead, and He placed His right hand upon me, saying to me, Fear not; I am the First and the Last: and Who am living, and was made dead, and behold I am living into the ages of ages, amen; and I have the keys of hell and of death."

XVI.

EASTWARD.

THE angel rose to depart anon, saying that he had been recalled. With a warm clasp of the hand, he turned from me, and in a moment was gone from view. "Oh, may I, too, see the glorious Lord when He descends among the angels, some day!" was my enraptured thought as I sat still and looked into vacancy. I chid myself for this presumption, but always the thought came back, "Oh, may these eyes behold Him!" So chiding and so thinking, I rose and left the house wherein we had rested. I turned my back upon that place, and set my face toward the east.

For a long, long time I lived a wanderer's life, moving from place to place, from community to community, seeking the things I loved and longed for, and struggling — not always, alas! with full determination — to conquer the evil inclinations of my heart. Mindful of the teaching that well-disposed spirits should not be idle, I sought employment wherever I sojourned, finding happiness in the endeavor to perform my duties faithfully, but regarding always such engagements as temporary, and looking ever forward to the time when I should come into that life of happy usefulness toward which my thoughts inclined.

For the most part my state was now one of peace, from a willingness to abide in the stream of the Divine Providence whithersoever it might lead; but there were times when a feeling of profound sadness possessed me. The hope of finding those congenial ones with whom I might remain indefinitely seemed so long deferred, and as yet I looked in vain for some permanent place of instruction where the light of angelic wisdom illumined the minds of those who taught. My case was worse than I had feared. It might be I was not fit to sit at the feet of heavenly instructors, my evils being still too active. They were deep-rooted, interior; only long struggles and temptations yet to come could render them quiescent and harmless. How long — how long?

At last there came to pass the change which long ago I had been led to expect, — the transition from the first state, that of the exteriors, to the second, that of the interiors. The change was so gradual that I was not clearly aware of it at the time, and yet I can recall looking back upon my former state as an awakening man looks back upon a dream. In a sense it was like day after night, but more like freedom after captivity. All restraint was now removed, and no longer was there the desire or the power to conceal. The man-angel or the man-devil stood confessed. There was no more a divided mind. I spoke henceforth from my inner, not my outer thought. My quality was written upon my face, and, did I desire, I could not feign. The case was similar with those about me, and many an evil one was unmasked before his well-disposed and

unsuspecting companions. The internal differences between me and those with whom I successively associated myself were, therefore, very quickly manifest. The whole scene was one of disintegration and change, each one moving in the direction of those with whom he could be joined in bonds of genuine friendship, from a unity or similarity of taste, habit, inclination, love.

The history of that time is full of useful reminders, but I must pass forward to what is of greater interest for this record. One day, on quitting a community wherein I had sojourned but a short time, I received information which changed the whole course of my life, and brought my wanderings to an end. I had left the town far behind and come into a pleasing open country of rolling hills and clear flowing streams, when all at once I looked up from the path to behold a man before me, — a man whose bright open face and steadfast eye instantly won my confidence, and whose white flowing robe of shining linen proclaimed him a messenger from above.

"It is perceived," said he, after saluting me graciously, "that you seek a place where spirits are prepared by instruction for heaven, and it is now granted you to approach. Go forward between those two hills," pointing to the northeast, "and you will find what you desire. I trust they will receive you there."

"May Heaven bless the bearer of this good message!" I said with joy.

The messenger smiled with gracious friendliness

at my words, but bade me forget the human instrument, and lift my soul in gratitude toward the one Source of every blessing. Listening to the forceful and beautiful expression of a noble sentiment, I was most willing to be detained till he bade me farewell and was gone. Then I turned eagerly and hurried forward in the direction indicated. The trees, plants, and flowers were bending before a gentle breeze and glistened in the sun; their great loveliness seemed unusual, as if they knew my joy and brightened with the knowing, I looked from side to side upon the smiling landscape, and smiled back as I walked. My heart was full of thankfulness.

At length I stood between the two hills, and the college rose before my view. It was a lofty and extended building of noble design, similar in general architectural type to that of the ancient Greeks, and stood upon a hill surrounded by green lawns and gardens and groves. As I drew near, it was seen that the foundation and body of the structure were built of unhewn stones of a curious dark red color; the towers likewise were of stone, but of a beautiful blue-white, and translucent, shining from afar. A nearer view also discovered the neighboring groves made up of laurels, pines, cedars, and myrtles, with here and there a stately palm.

"It is not heaven itself, but, God willing, it shall be the stepping-stone thereto," was my exultant thought, as I mounted the broad portico and stood before the double doors of the great hall, on each of which was carved an eagle with outstretched wings.

A serving-man came in answer to my summons, and courteously invited me to enter. "I am glad you have come," he said, with great respect, and with a smile of genuine kindliness. "It always makes me glad for a new one to come."

"How extraordinary!" thought I. "Here is a servant who finds delight in serving." I felt interested in and strongly drawn toward him. He was perhaps from the lower classes of the world, but was a comely youth of a pleasing presence.

"You are very good," I said, in answer to him.

"One of our young men left us yesterday," he continued, "and I felt assured that another would come to-day."

"Left you? — where to go?"

"To heaven."

"Heaven!" I could have shouted with exultation as I followed my guide down the great hall. Ushering me into a reception-room on the right, he retired with the words, "I go to announce you to the head-master." I sat down to wait, with a feeling of peace and security such as I had not before known, — a feeling that was deepened when I looked across at the opposite wall and read these words written there in letters of gold: —

"*Behold, how good and how lovely for brethren to dwell together in unity.*"

As I looked, and thought upon this heavenly sentiment, the head-master came, — a tall, noble-looking man, clothed beautifully in an undergarment of fine, bright linen, bound at the waist with a cord of knitted gold, and an outer robe of blue which shone

richly as the light touched it. I rose respectfully at his entrance, and awaited his pleasure. He looked at me keenly as he came forward, but there was friendship in his eyes.

"The college welcomes you, friend," he said, extending his hand.

"I am thankful for its welcome."

He seated himself in a large, richly-carved chair of red wood, and at his invitation I too sat down, in a smaller chair, before him. During a few moments he looked at me in silence, and I felt, with some uneasiness, that he was reading my character to its bottom. At last he spoke: —

"First of all, I must ask you whom you worship?"

"I worship the Lord."

"Who is the Lord?"

"The God of heaven and earth," I answered in amazement, — "the Creator of all things."

"And who is He who in the natural form of the Divine Word is called Jesus Christ?"

"He is the same."

"And what is meant by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?"

"I know not," I answered with hesitation, yet without fear; "the saying is dark and obscure. Many things in the Divine Word seem dark and obscure to me. But this I know, — the Lord Jesus Christ is the one only God. Of this I have ever felt assured. Did not He Himself say, 'I and the Father are One?'— and lately I have been instructed that angels who lived as men on earth at the time of His

sojourn there now recognize Him in the one only God of heaven."

There was an intense silence of a moment before the head-master rejoined: —

"You have spoken well. I knew before I asked that you would thus speak, but it was better that you should express yourself. Only worshippers of the Lord Jesus Christ can be received here; for those who do not worship Him, and Him alone, think of more than one God, which is repugnant to the very atmosphere of heaven and destructive of the heaven-sent delights which are ours here. You are received," he added, after a moment's pause.

"I thank the Lord that it is so," I answered.

"You truly say," he then spoke further, "that many things in the natural sense of the Divine Word are dark and obscure. The natural or literal form of the Word existing in the earth was written according to appearances, and in accommodation to the states of simple men; but in the spirit of the Divine Word, which exists within the letter through correspondence, as a soul exists in its body, nothing is dark or obscure. That spiritual Word, which exists here and in the heavens, teaches us that the Lord God of heaven Himself descended to the natural plane of life, clothing Himself outwardly in the very substance of the natural world, in order that He might subdue the powers of evil which assaulted man upon that plane, and so make it possible for him to be regenerated and saved. It teaches us that by the Father is meant the inmost or soul of this incar-

nate Lord, by the Son the Human assumed, and by the Holy Spirit the Divine proceeding or going forth into operation. Later you will be more fully instructed in these things."

A great light had suddenly burst through the obstructing clouds, and I saw clearly the grand and eternal truth which hitherto had been veiled from my sight. I sat bound as by a spell in my delight, and uttered no word.

"This spiritual Word," the head-master went on, "is written, as you may suppose, in the universal language of the spiritual world which we now speak. It is the Book of Books, and every copy of it, or of parts of it, is distinguished by a soft radiance proceeding from its opened pages. You will presently see that the copy set apart among us here, which ever lies open in the chancel of our hall of worship, shines like a great star, — so representing the spiritual resplendence and glory of the Lord's Divine truth contained therein."

What could be more reasonable, more fitting, more lovely? Had I been disposed to doubt, I should still have thought, this may be dreaming fancy, but it is most beautiful, and should be as true.

"This Divine Word," the master continued, after a pause, "is the guide of our lives and the fountain of all angelic wisdom. From it we derive the knowledge which we impart to the students preparing for heaven under our charge, and from it you will henceforth be taught. From it you will learn that the Lord God descended to the natural world in order to remove hell from man, and insure the possibility

of his salvation; that, as this could be done only by means of the temptations wherewith He suffered Himself to be assaulted, even to the last and most extreme, the passion of the cross, He therefore endured that also; that thus the impending damnation threatening heaven and earth was removed, and that after completing this divine work our Lord returned into His essential Divine, together with and in His glorified Human; that the Lord created the universe, not from nothing, but from Himself, — from His Divine Love by His Divine Wisdom, — and that the image of the Creater is impressed upon every created thing; that man, in order to be conjoined with this gracious God, must subdue his evils, both hereditary and acquired, and live in love and charity to the neighbor; that within the sacred Scripture of the natural world lies concealed a soul or spirit, which is one with the Divine Word of the heavens, and that thus there is communication and conjunction of heaven with earth. Our Divine Word will teach you these general truths, and under them myriads of particular truths relating to all things of the universe and solving every mystery of earth or heaven."

"I thank the gracious Lord for His Divine Word, and for His good ministers who will instruct me therefrom," I said, deeply moved in the contemplation of the glorious prospect before me.

The head-master now rose, signifying that the interview was at an end. "Go with him," said he, as the young serving man appeared in the doorway. "He will show you what you are now to do."

The young man led me into the great hall, and presently through a lesser hall, branching at right angles, and finally into a sleeping apartment of ordinary size, appropriately and charmingly furnished.

"This is your place of rest," he said, cheerily, "I hope it pleases you."

"It does please me."

He then opened a wardrobe and showed me several long white robes of a silken texture.

"It is expected that you select one of these and put it on after the bath," he said. "You will find here what under-garments you need," he added, stooping and opening a drawer and taking out several articles, — all white.

This done, and having taken down one of the robes which I selected, he came out and shut the door. Opening a second wardrobe, he showed me similar silken robes of white, but distinguished by a beautiful cord of gold encircling the waist.

"These are for the banquets on festal days," he said. "Do you know," this intelligent servant continued, looking at me intently; "I have been told that in heaven, although there is a putting on and off at will, the garments themselves change in appearance and color according to the angel's change of state. Is it not beautiful?"

"Beautiful indeed."

"Our students work in the morning, — that is, they study and are taught," the young man proceeded. "At noon they dine, and afterward take in-door and out-door recreation, playing games, taking walks, or riding their horses, as it may please them. If it be a

festal day, they dine with the masters in the great banqueting hall, clothed in this robe with the golden cord. The feast that is spread is plentiful and varied, but even at that hour the food for the body is secondary to the food for the soul. There is always conversation, led by the masters — sometimes addresses — and these are full of instruction. Often my duties take me where I can listen, and I am always thankful that there is much that I can understand,"

A door was now opened, and I was shown my bath, a small marble-paved apartment, in the centre of which a pool of clear water was seen. My attendant left me musing on the blessed fortune which had brought me to this place. How full of happiness would my life be here, and how little was it deserved!

I came out of the bath greatly refreshed and invigorated, and, as I put on my new clothing, the thought occurred to me: "Surely this bath in pure water is typical of purification from evil. With my former garments I leave behind my former state and now enter upon a new. The Lord grant that, in some measure, imperfection and evil are left behind also."

Returning to the sleeping apartment, I was assisted by my kind servitor in donning the silken robe, which was found to be only a lower or under-garment, the himation or upper robe being absent.

"The himation will be given you later," was the answer to my inquiring look.

Wondering, I followed the attendant back to the reception-room, and after a few moments the head-master joined me there.

"Now, come with me," he said, and, as I moved to obey, the sound of a deep-toned but musical bell reverberated through the building.

I followed him out through the great hall, and thence into a long, lofty, and beautiful room, which was at once recognized as the hall of worship; for at the far end on a repository in the centre of the chancel lay an open book which blazed with light, — as if in very truth a star had fallen from heaven and rested there. And as my eyes fell upon it, I was moved with profound humility and awe; I felt that I stood in the presence of God.

At the same time I observed that eleven men, whose apparel was similar to that of the head-master, had preceded us there and stood on either side as I was led in. As soon as we had passed between them, all kneeled with faces toward the chancel — which was in the east — and repeated in unison these words: "O Lord most high, we pray that our minds may ever be illumined by the light of Thy Divine Truth!"

Then, after we had risen, one of the eleven men came forward with the himation belonging to my robe. Receiving it from him, the head-master solemnly placed it upon me, repeating these words: —

"In the presence of the Lord I put upon you the garments appropriate to your state, and receive you among us."

Full of deep happiness and deeper reverence, I

kneeled before him, and listened with indescribable emotions as the head-master invoked the Divine blessing upon me, and prayed that I might in due time be prepared for a life of happy usefulness in the Lord's heavenly kingdom.

XVII.

FRIENDSHIP.

THE prayer ended, the head-master and the eleven filed one after another out of the hall of worship, and last of all I followed. In an outer apartment I was then presented to the eleven, who, it now appeared, together with the head-master, were the twelve teachers of the institution. Each welcomed me with kindly smiles and wise words.

"You must now be introduced to the students, and I shall leave you with them for the present," said the head-master. "Many of them by this time are out walking or riding, but we shall no doubt find some on the south terrace."

He then led me out through the great hall to a lofty portico facing the south, below which was a broad terrace overlooking a wide and beautiful valley. Roads wound through this valley and up the hillsides, and I saw at a distance many young men on horses, others taking the air on foot, still others sitting in garden chairs under the laurels and myrtles of the neighboring groves. On the paved and flower-rimmed terrace about a dozen students, in dress similar to my own, were strolling back and forth in pairs or groups of three or four, and conversing. As soon as the nearer ones observed the head-master they came forward to meet him.

"I bring you a new companion. Give him your welcome," he said to them, glancing from one to another with every evidence of perfect friendship.

"You make us glad, and we thank you, kind father," the foremost responded, and all returned his look of affection.

"They are 'glad,'" I thought, with wonder and relief, for I had not approached them without certain misgivings. "Then they do not regard me in any sense as a possible rival, or view me with that cold, ungenerous criticism, the offspring of jealousy, so all-pervading in the world."

They *were* glad. They gathered about me, and, as the head-master left us, greeted me with the kindest and most genuine expression of good-will. I was so moved by it that I stood among them with a stammering tongue and eyes full of starting tears. "They really seem to care as much for my welfare as for their own," I thought. "God help me to return this love."

Not all of their faces could be called perfectly handsome in outline, according to the standard carried in my mind, but assuredly there was something tender and beautiful in the countenance of each and all.

"We have been discussing friendship," one of them said to me, after all had warmly grasped my hand, "and we unanimously take the position, with some variety of application, that the truly good man can be in genuine friendship only to the good. For to befriend a wicked man is to increase his power of doing evil, and no good man can consent to increase a wicked man's power of doing evil."

"That is a new idea to me," I said, "but I accept it as true."

"And we take the position," another continued, "that true friendship or charity requires of us to care more for the welfare of our friends, or those among whom we dwell, than we do for our own. Above all else, the Lord is our Friend, and therefore we should have greater concern to do those things which are pleasing to Him than to indulge ourselves in selfish vanities. Secondarily, all the angels and all good men are our friends, and we should desire more to promote their happiness than our own."

"This is what friendship means among the angels," continued a third, "and it is our earnest aim to give it that meaning here; but in the natural world it too often means a selfish regard for those who have been of use to us, or who by flattery and other arts have made themselves agreeable. The average man of the earth says in his heart that the command to love others as we love ourselves is a mere poetical sentiment, and that to love others more than ourselves is preposterous; granting such a love to be possible, those who cultivated it would be mere servants, deprived of all freedom, and having no pleasure in life. Immersed in such gross thoughts, the man of the earth can have no conception of the delight of such love; he little dreams of the ineffable happiness that reigns in the heavenly community where every one loves his neighbor more than himself, and where, consequently, no one is ever harmed in thought or deed."

"And do you love each other here more than you love yourselves?" I asked.

"No; only the angels are in that blessed state. But when we are in good states, we love each other equally well with ourselves."

"And is not your state always good?"

"Ah, no — not yet. Our evil inclinations are not yet entirely subdued, and there are times when we are let down, as it were, into our former selves, for the sake of temptation and humiliation."

"And we have agreed that after the Lord and the Church, the prince is in the highest sense our friend and neighbor," spoke another who till now had been silent.

"The 'prince'?" I repeated, wondering.

"The prince of the heavenly society with which our college is in connection."

"Are there princes in heaven?" I asked, eagerly.

"We have been instructed that there is one for every society or province there."

"And do they live in state — in palaces — as do princes on earth?"

"Why not? Dignity and honor belong to those who are in superior goodness and wisdom. Our masters have taught us that there are governments in the heavens, and consequently various ranks and orders, with distinctions of dignity, eminence, power, and authority. Those of the highest rank have courts and live in palaces, and they are given such positions from no other cause than superior fitness. They are princes because they are the wisest and best. Their chiefest delight is in promoting the

public good, and they are only externally pleased with the distinction of dignity for the sake of order and subordination. The houses of all the angels are beautiful, but those of the princes are most beautiful, being resplendent from afar with gold and precious stones, and distinguished by magnificence such as no palace of earth can remotely suggest."

This was truly as it should be. The lovely picture of heavenly royalty stirred in me none but pleasing emotions. I was never a democrat at bottom, and if the prince or the king can be also an angel of heaven, then, with all my heart, "Long live the king!"

As they thus spoke with me, I presently became aware that another student was approaching our group from a distant part of the terrace, and as he joined us I looked up and recognized Alaric Mortimer.

"You here!" I cried, stirred with new and great happiness.

There was a change in him. He was the same handsome man, with the same winning way, but in the expression of his face and eyes I thought I saw less of the earth and more of heaven.

"I knew you would come, my friend, — my dear friend," he said as I hastened to meet him, and our hands were clasped. There was a glad look in his eye as he threw his left arm over my shoulder — almost about my neck — in the old way.

"Then you were here before me? You have been here long?" I asked in wonder.

"Yes. It seems to me sometimes that I have always been here."

Seeing how it was with us, the others drew away, pursuing their conversation on true friendship.

"And your two friends at the college of the 'wise'?" I asked, and saw an expression of pain start up and die out quickly in Alaric's face.

"That was my last and most serious temptation there below," he answered. "I was led to this place soon after."

His words smote upon me painfully, for I vividly recalled our parting on that memorable night, our conversation, his seeming weakness, and the fact that I then believed my state to be greatly in advance of his.

Moving to a seat not far away, we talked a long while, — glancing now and then toward the young men riding in the valley and on the hills, but looking most into each other's eyes. Alaric told all the story of his struggles after our parting, his endeavors to save his two friends, their determined downward course and final separation from him, his removal to his present place and happy life there. And I told him my story.

"I am rebuked for my presumption," I said, with humility. "I find you here before me, long established, — you whom I thought weaker and less wise than I."

Gently ignoring this, he answered, "I knew always that you would come; I felt that we were too much in sympathy to be long separated."

So we talked on and on, till the twilight began to

fall. Then Alaric went with me to my room, where we sat down and still talked on and on; for of a truth we two were friends, deeply in sympathy, the one with the other. As he rose and bade me good night, I threw open my window and looked out, calling on him then to observe that the night was not night at all, but only a gray twilight. "Real night has no place here on the confines of heaven," was his comment.

I had barely risen and dressed the next morning, when, in answer to a rap, I opened the door and admitted Alaric.

"I want to see much of you while I may," he said, in explanation of his early visit. "A feeling or presentiment that I might be removed erelong has been with me a good deal of late."

"Do you mean that we are to be separated again?" I asked in concern.

"You will come after me," was his answer.

A sudden light broke in upon my mind. "You are to be elevated into heaven!" I said solemnly, a certain awe upon me.

"It may be. For days I have been conscious of a new feeling which seems to tell me so."

"Then how can I feel regret? It fills me with happiness to think of it," I said. Nevertheless, my feelings were somewhat mixed as we sat there together and discussed the glorious prospect.

Alaric rose to go anon, saying there were certain duties which he must perform before the students met for instruction that morning. As he halted at the door, my eyes fell upon this inscription, in

beautiful gold letters upon the south wall of my room: —

"*He who is not punctual despoils his neighbor of time.*"

"Look there," I said, amazed. Then, in a lower key, "It was not there yesterday."

"No; and it will not be there to-morrow. Every day there will be a new one, adapted to your needs. To-day it is well for you to begin your work here with the idea prominently in mind that it is your duty ever to be punctual."

"Who writes these inscriptions, — the head-master?"

"No, not even the head-master knows what inscriptions will appear each day. In the chamber of each student they come and go as if by magic. Need we ask what Influence controls and directs them?"

"Ah, this is heaven," I whispered, awestruck, yet filled with happiness.

"Not heaven, but a heavenly training-school, where the All-seeing Eye is ever upon us, looking to our good."

XVIII.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

HALF an hour later, at the first stroke of the great bell, I opened my door and joined the procession moving toward the chapel. Here masters and students all assembled and reverently kneeled with faces toward the open Word in the east, still enveloped in that wondrous star-like halo, while the head-master prayed to the Lord that the light of His Divine Truth might illumine all minds, that the masters might ever be led to think rightly from truth and to conclude justly according to reason, and that the minds of the students might be opened more and more to the reception of heavenly instruction. The head-master then approached the repository in the centre of the chancel where lay the opened Word, and, standing there with its radiating light full upon him, read aloud a beautiful selection. This done, he came down to a pulpit on the left and delivered a short address, after which the assembly stood waiting till he walked down the aisle and out of the chapel. The other masters then filed out, and lastly the students, some two hundred in number. And so came to an end the initial act of the morning's instruction.

The attempt will not be made to give a commensurate idea of the instruction received in the various

class-rooms that morning, and during all the mornings following; to do so would result in a thousand volumes instead of one. Let it suffice to say that, besides the laws of heavenly order, of love to God and man, of right thinking and right doing, every mystery of heaven and earth was solved. The universe became, as it were, an open book, as all phenomena, spiritual and natural, were explained and made clear under light from the Divine Word in its spirit, the very sun of truth. In that light man was seen to be a creature utterly dead of himself, being given life from the creating Divine, every day and hour and moment of time; in that light the natural universe was seen to be but an out-birth or covering of the spiritual, from which it derives all its life. In that light it was made manifest that in every seed of the natural world, animal or vegetable, there is a soul or spiritual germ, which, while it clothes itself in matter, during every instant of time derives its life through heaven from the Creator and Preserver. Thus the Lord enters into the inmosts of everything in nature, giving to it existence and perpetual subsistence; and were He to withdraw one instant this vitalizing inward force flowing down from Him, the whole natural universe would be resolved into inconceivable chaos and become as nothing.

Let it be added, that instruction here differed from that received on earth in this, that truths were not committed to the memory, but to the life; they were indeed learned, but only that they might be *done*, the affection of truth being continually inspired for the sake of and from the uses of life.

At noon of that day — my first to sit at the feet of angelic instructors — the students were dismissed as usual, and retired to change their robes, an hour later all gathering in the great banqueting hall. For it was a feast day. The table was so built as to form three sides of a long, hollow rectangle, the interior of which was left vacant in order that the view from one of the parallel sides to the other might be unobstructed. The head-master occupied the place of honor, his associates on either hand, and down the long sides of the rectangle were ranged the students. The masters faced the east end of the hall, wherein there was a rostrum and a speaker's desk in full view from every part of the banqueting board.

The students wore the white festal robes already described; the masters appeared in under garments of a golden or silvery color with himations of blue; the head-master wearing in addition a cap of rich red, the front of which gleamed radiantly with a combination of most precious and varied stones shaping an eagle with outstretched wings. In this I recognized the crest of the college arms, which was to be seen at almost every turn, either carved on the doors or emblazoned on the walls, — in the latter case with this inscription beneath:

"*Thou renewest thy youth like the eagle.*"

Beautiful and fit seemed these words, in the light of the truth that the inhabitants of heaven renew their youth to eternity. Most fitting, too, it was, thought I, that an eagle should have been chosen for

the crest of the arms borne by this college which instructed young men in truth, for I recalled how Ariel had taught me that birds which *soared* through the air signified intellectual things.

The festal board was beautiful with decorations of living flowers and vessels of silver and gold. There were many fruits, as grapes, olives, figs, pomegranates, etc., besides delicious breads and wines. But before any one was seated, and as all stood still around the board, the head-master solemnly prayed that in eating and drinking at this feast we might be the more joined together in mutual love, and thus be drawn nearer to the Lord, eating and drinking being representative of the reception of good and truth from Him. During the feast the students were attentive to conversation among the masters, devoted to a subject selected for the occasion, which was, "the Lord's Church in the Heavens and in the Earths." Never before had it been made clear to me how small and contemptible, relatively, was a single man; and yet this single man was a wonderful little world in himself, proclaiming the glory of his Creator. *In the earths* meant in all the planets attached to the millions of suns or fixed stars of the natural universe, and *in the heavens* all the heavens formed from these earths during countless ages. It was shown, too, how small in number, relatively, were those without as compared with those within the Church, — that is, those in evil as compared with those in good. Fully one third of the human race die in infancy and childhood, and are saved, and these, added to those regenerated in adult life through the

teachings of the Divine Word, or, as among the heathen, through a life of innocence and charity, make the members of the Lord's Church in number so vast that the devils in the hells and the evil upon the earths form in comparison but an unimportant minority.

There had been much conversation on this and similar subjects, and we had been seated a long time — a time of continuing delight for all — when the head-master announced that we would now listen to one of the senior students who had expressed a desire to speak. In pleased surprise I saw Alaric rise, walk forward, and mount the rostrum in the east end of the hall. Facing us, he bowed reverently to the masters, saluted the students, and began to speak. Never before had he appeared so handsome, and his countenance wore an expression of happiness and peace that was restful to look upon. Would that I could reproduce entire that beautiful speech. I give only the outline as it now lives in my memory.

"Beloved father, revered teachers, and my dear brothers," he began, thus addressing the head-master, his associates, and the students. "You all know that while our gracious Lord walked upon the earth below He spoke on a time in the ears of simple men a simple story. There was a certain king, He told them, who made a marriage for his son, and when the king came in among the guests in the festal hall, he saw there a man who was not clothed in a wedding garment, and he said to him, 'Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding

garment?' And the man was speechless. And the king said to his servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness.'

"Such was the story spoken by the Lord, simple in its literal form but containing within it wonderful arcana of wisdom. From the Divine Word in spirit we learn that by the marriage feast the Lord represented heaven, where is the marriage of good and truth in every angel, and by the man without a wedding garment those who enter the spiritual world destitute of the spiritual clothing necessary to fit them for heaven. Let us examine and see what it really means to be without a wedding garment.

"At this day man is born into all the evil tendencies of his parents for generations back, and is of himself, through this heredity and through evils acquired, nothing but corruption. Both his understanding and will are distorted; he understands nothing of real truth and wills nothing of genuine good, what he himself calls good and true being in reality evil and false. For example, in his heart he says it is good and true to love himself better than others, to desire what belongs to another, to be concerned about himself and not about others, except for the sake of himself, to commit each and every sin which in any way may appear to benefit or give him pleasure. And if any one endeavor to injure or restrict him as to these evil loves which he secretly calls good, he hates such a person and burns with thoughts of revenge, taking delight in medi-

tating his ruin. Such is man's state as of himself before he is reformed. If he be never reformed, if he successively and continuously turn a deaf ear when the Lord knocks at the door of his mind and heart, and go onward confirming himself in these evil tendencies, excusing them and thus calling them good, he further perverts his naturally perverted nature and constantly immerses himself deeper and deeper in the love of what is infernal, no matter how good he may appear to be outwardly as to moral and civil life.

"Such an one, on coming into the spiritual life, has the same evil desires, the essential nature acquired in the world remaining with him, a part of him; for what a man loves is his very life. These evil desires dominate him altogether, yea, affect the very structure of his soul, and he is recognized at sight as an infernal. There are, indeed, some who from long habit in the life of the body have become such forms of deceit — concealing their interiors and composing their exteriors — that they can feign themselves angels of light and even insinuate themselves into the lower heavenly societies. But such cannot long continue there, for not only are they soon recognized, but they begin to be inwardly troubled and tormented, suffering thus from the contrariety of the heavenly aura flowing in and operating. In a heavenly society every one wishes better to others than to himself. The wicked man among angels, therefore, is as a wolf among lambs. He has not on the wedding garment, he is naked as to the goods and truths which it was his blessed privilege to acquire, or put

on, as garments, and he must of necessity be cast into 'outer darkness,' or hell, where are his like.

"Our Heavenly Father has mercifully provided that this hereditary evil nature may be extirpated during man's life in the body, and all acquired evil subdued, if man will but co-operate with Him. This wonderful work is accomplished by regeneration from the Lord, which is the receiving of a new will and a new understanding. It cannot be done in a moment; it is the struggle of a lifetime. Man must first of all learn from Divine revelation what is evil and false and what is good and true; for without such knowledge he can make no progress, since of himself he believes nothing to be good but what is evil.

"In the Divine mercy it is so ordered that he first acquires such apparent truths as that all love begins from self; that self is first to be regarded, and then others; that good is to be done to the poor, to widows and orphans, whatsoever may be their quality or character; through these the Lord may insinuate the beginnings of a regenerated will. This is the state of infancy and childhood as to the new life. The state of its youth and after growth succeeds when gradually regard is no longer had to any one's person, such as he appears externally, but only to his quality as to good, first in civil, then in moral, and finally in spiritual life. At this stage of the regeneration of his understanding and will, man begins to give priority to good, loving it and from it only loving the person in whom it is. He now sees what it really is to love the Lord and

the neighbor, and to take delight therein. He understands that really to love the Lord is to will to do the Divine law; he sees that, while there is to be kindliness and good-will toward all, he is to study to do good only to the man or men in whom good is seen to reside, for none others are in the true sense the neighbor.

"So he goes forward, rejecting the false and learning the true, shunning the evil and doing the good, while looking ever to the Lord, until — when he casts off his natural body and enters the spiritual world — he is as to the very substance and structure of his soul a new creature. He is spiritually clothed; he has put on the wedding garment. He comes to the wedding feast of eternity spread for him by the Lord fully prepared, because in himself good and truth have been joined in an everlasting marriage."

Such in outline was the speech delivered by Alaric Mortimer on that memorable day. At its close, as he halted silent for one instant, crowned by the full approval of the masters, who smiled upon him tenderly, and by the manifest admiration of every student, — in that instant, ere he moved to descend from the rostrum and take his seat, a great light suddenly enveloped the place where he stood, and an angel, clothed in beautiful shining garments, was seen near him, holding out to him a wreath of leaves like the laurel.

I could have shouted for joy. But when the angel, having placed the wreath upon his head, took his hand and led him from the rostrum, and out

through a door in the east wall of the room, I was conscious of almost a sinking of the heart, and looked toward the head-master in mute appeal, not realizing that I thought of my own happiness and not of my friend's.

As I looked toward him, the head-master was in the act of rising to his feet, and from his expression I concluded that the coming of the angel had not been anticipated. "It has come sooner than I had expected," his look seemed to say.

The other masters also rose and followed their head down the banqueting-hall, and into that mysterious apartment beyond the east wall of the room which I knew not of, and into which my friend and brother had disappeared. What was to be done there? The students looked into each other's faces significantly, but no one asked this question. It was clear that Alaric was now to be elevated into heaven. By this time I had checked all selfish feeling, and felt thoroughly glad for his sake; but still my joy was tempered with a certain vague misgiving as regards myself. Would I surely follow him?

The students retained their seats in awed silence, and the great banqueting-hall seemed strangely still. But presently the door in the east wall was opened and Alaric himself came forth, attended by several of the masters. His eyes glowed like stars, and his face wore an indescribable expression of joy. We whose eyes were now riveted upon him, though observant of these signs, little dreamed what happiness was his. He stood upon the platform and

said a few words of farewell, which I scarcely heeded, such was my excitement.

When he had finished, at a sign from one of the masters the students rose and quietly filed past him, grasping his hand in farewell. I hung back and approached him last of all. Smiling, he drew me up upon the rostrum, holding my hand in a long clasp; and all my heart went out to him in friendship and love.

"You will come after me — to the same society of heaven," he said. "I feel it."

"God grant it," I answered.

Then he put his left arm round my neck — this angel youth — and silently kissed me on the forehead. And in another moment he was gone.

Dismissed, the other students left the banqueting-hall and wandered out on the terrace, there breaking into groups to discuss the great event. But I lingered in the still, deserted place a long, long time — even until at last the masters returned through that mysterious door. Then I ran toward them, asking, —

"Has he gone with the angel — to heaven?"

"He has gone."

XIX.

THE MAIDEN AND THE DOVE.

THE next day my thoughts were more engaged with Alaric, my angel friend, than with my masters and what they taught me; but after still another day this preoccupation had subsided and I rested in a contented calm. What was a temporary separation that I should so dwell upon it in thought? The Lord ruled in all things, and every event of my life was most assuredly ordered with a view to my eternal welfare. Then let me preserve an even mind, I inwardly reflected, and strive to place myself with glad willingness in the stream of the Divine Providence, meanwhile doing the work that must be done ere the time was ripe for the heavenly gate to open.

For some days I pursued my studies, calm and happy in these thoughts; but perfect peace does not abide without the walls of heaven. Came the time anon, when a storm-cloud threatened in my horizon; even so it could seem to one so unworthy as I, whose trust and confidence might yet be shaken. It came in this wise. One day, after a happy feast whereat the instruction of the preceding days was, as it were, crowned and made complete, I walked forth alone. Later on, I rarely if ever sought solitude, for the

society of my student companions became in every way so agreeable that I loved nothing better, unless it were to be among my masters ; the association in the one case was as the pleasantness of a grove of varied trees, in the other as the delight in a lovely and well-ordered garden. For the students were in intelligence and the masters in wisdom. But on this day, while the others took the air in groups, on their horses, or afoot, I felt strongly impelled to wander off alone, choosing a path which led southward through the valley, and finally up a hillside to the southeast. The stately groves which succeeded on either side of the winding path in ever-continuing variety lifted my mind among serious but cheerful thoughts, and suffused me with an atmosphere of quiet happiness.

At the top of the hill I beheld with pleasure another beautiful valley beyond, and within its limits on a rising slope a building similar to our college, but with distinctive features of its own, there being a slenderness and grace about its glistening turrets and towers which contrasted with our more massive structure. Strongly attracted, I made my way downward over the forest-clothed hillside into the valley. But it so chanced that I was diverted from my object, and did not draw near and view the beautiful building.

I had left behind the pines, the firs, and the cedars, and come where myrtles stood in whispering groups, — for the soft wind stirred their green ovate leaves, and pale delicate flowers, — where graceful palms looked down on blossoming almond trees,

and where a scarlet flower, unknown on earth, lay grouped upon the ground like sheeted flame. In this rare spot I saw a sight which stayed my hurrying feet.

A fair young maid, — myrtles to the right of her, almonds to the left of her, tall palms behind her, the rich red flowers at her feet. She sat on a garden bench bending over a piece of embroidery, in which the artful intertwining of crimson with snow-white silken threads was an unconscious echo of the beautiful mingling of the red and the white of her cheek. At her side, on the arm of the bench, was perched a dove, all white, except for a purple ring about its neck. And neither the maiden nor her bird had marked the advancing intruder, who stopped short and held his very breath in wonder and almost in fear.

The tableau was too fair; I wondered if I dreamed. A twig cracked under my foot, and I was answered straight. The bird flew up with a note of alarm, and the young maid started to her feet, — looking at me searchingly for a moment with some sign of apprehension, then with returning serenity. The ages will come and go, but never shall I forget the look of those eyes as they pierced straight to my soul. They were large and lovely eyes of the darkest blue. And that face! The springs of my heart were let loose as I looked upon it, and the conviction came over me in a tremulous flood of joy that all beauty, all gentleness, all nobility, all goodness, dwelt there.

"Do not be alarmed," I said, in a voice somewhat shaken, drawing nearer and observing now that she

wore a silken garment of a pale sky-blue, which seemed to blend with faint rose tints as she moved.

"Be not alarmed," I repeated with only half-suppressed ardor. Then, beside myself, "I would not harm you for a million worlds."

"You would not be allowed to harm me," she made answer, and the music of her voice was a wonder and delight. There was no cause for fear; I could not harm her if I would. As she made known this fact, full confidence in unseen protection was written upon her face, but still her smile was not unfriendly.

"I am troubled," she frankly avowed, "because I am doubtful if it be well for me to speak with you here."

She looked as she spoke, toward her dove, which, after a short upward flight, had descended and settled on the back of the bench. Turning again to me, she asked, —

"How did you pass the guards?"

"Guards? I saw none."

"They must have seen you."

"Perhaps," I spoke impetuously, after a moment, — "perhaps this time no harm was apprehended, and the intruder was allowed to pass without question."

Again her eyes sought the bird, as though in inquiry. Turning to me, she said, half musingly, "I have heard that sometimes it is so ordered. It is made known to the guards by an inward dictate or sign when they need not arrest the intruder at the boundary."

The dove now returned to its former perch, and,

after a few moments of seeming hesitation, the young maid resumed her seat.

"You are a student from the neighboring college, are you not?" she asked.

I answered, making bold to draw nearer as I spoke; and then she gently invited me to sit beside her on the bench.

"And you, will you not tell me who you are?" My manner was wistful, almost ardent, but profoundly respectful.

"I belong to our college for young women," she answered simply, her lovely eyes lifted from her embroidery and full upon me.

"And you are there preparing for heaven," I said, no question in my tone, so sure was I, and so pleased to find that there was a college for young girls similar to our own.

"Yes," she said; "we are always taught to look forward to heaven, which seems more and more near to us as our schoolmates, one after another, finish their time and are removed there."

"And have you been in this college long?" I went on to ask, eager for particulars.

"About three years," was her unhesitating reply. "Before that I lived in another school for five years."

"You have lived in the spiritual world much longer than I."

"I can scarcely recall the natural world," she rejoined. "I was only a little girl of ten when I came away. On my arrival here an angel mother took me in charge and placed me in a school with other girls

of my own age. She was one of the teachers there, and she was so beautiful and good that I loved her tenderly from the beginning, although I was often a very bad little girl."

"Tell me more," I begged, as she paused.

"You are wondering if I was punished," — with a low, gentle laugh. "I was often and justly. I wore simple little white gowns always, except on festal days, and when I did wrong, dark, ugly spots would appear on them, and the angel mother would rebuke me by the sorrowful look in her beautiful eyes. I would then run away and weep, and when I had truly repented the spots would fade away, and the dear mother would smile again. Sometimes," she added, "my punishment would consist in the loss of the best loved of my festal gowns, which would vanish or be taken away I knew not how. At other times I would rejoice to find a new garment in my room, for this was a sign that I had acted well."

She showed a reserve and hesitation in speaking of herself, and would often pause, looking toward her dove as if to see whether she might go on; but question followed question, and she was forced to speak.

Thus she told me that after a few years she rarely did wrong in outward act, but was sometimes jealous of her companions and accused them of evil in her heart; and when this was so the punishments described above would recur, or the roses in her garden would hang their heads and wear a withered look. For it was one of her duties to care for the flowers in a little garden on which her chamber opened.

Led by this sign to recognize her evil state, she would then be affected with deep sorrow, and when her repentance was full and true, the roses would lift their heads, renewing their freshness and youth.

"How lovely!"

She added that sometimes, on going out, she would find the whole aspect of her garden changed, not merely the withering, but something like weeds springing up. She would then know that she had done evil, and not until she had examined herself and performed the work of repentance would the former appearance of things return. At other times she would rejoice to find her garden more lovely than ever, with new flowers growing there, for this indicated that she had done well.

"The signs which the Lord sends you in your school," I said, "are addressed to the affections, but those he sends us are addressed to the rational." I then told her what had appeared written on the wall of my room the first day of my arrival, and something of what I saw there later on.

"The Lord leads us in innumerable ways," she said. "I have before heard report of those wonderful scriptures on the wall."

She then told me that after she had grown to be a tall girl, and was past fifteen, she was removed to the present school, where there was much that was different. She still had her flowers, but there was now a new sign; she had been given a dove, and by its action was warned when she was unkind in thought or imprudent in act. She had heard that in some of the colleges the maidens were given

swans; in others, birds of paradise; in still others, lambs.

We had not seen each other till that hour; and how strange was this confidence, — this friendship and trust! How strange the feeling which came over me that I had known her from my boyhood up!

"I bless the day that brought me here," I told her, with a long, long look, as she ceased to speak.

There was a moment's stillness after I had spoken, and then, as the whirr of wings fell on my ear, the young maid started to her feet.

"My bird has flown!" she said, a shade of anxiety on her face. "I have stayed too long," she added, moving away.

I sprang up to follow, but one glance from her eye arrested me. My hands were lifted and followed after her, but my feet were stayed.

"Every day will I pray that I may see you again," I said, in great happiness and sore pain.

She did not pause, but she looked back and smiled, and there was heaven in that smile.

"Remember," I cried after her, softly, beside myself, "remember what shall be my daily prayer."

She did not halt, but again she looked back and smiled, and always there was heaven in that smile. So she passed on till the myrtles claimed her, — till the almond trees shut her from my sight, — and I, standing alone, looked about me with the vague regret and pain of one suddenly awakened from a dream of beauty.

I turned and went my way, striding forward blindly, filled with the turbulent thoughts of a

young man who for the first time believes that he loves a maid. Hurrying up the forest-clothed hillside, forgetful of and seeing not the guards supposed to watch the boundary, I descended into our own valley and walked there till the twilight fell, seeking then my own apartment in the college and avoiding every one.

My soul was troubled. New and unsuspected feelings were awake within me. What could such strange things mean? Here was I, a spirit, preparing, as I hoped, for heaven, with my whole soul shaken with thoughts of love for and marriage with a maid! Was this a last and crowning temptation sent from hell? Had not the Lord Himself said while on earth, "For in heaven they are neither married nor given in marriage?" How full of evil, then, was I to have such thoughts, to feel such emotions! But if this be sin, how sweet is sin! And if heaven be without love, how incomplete is heaven!

XX.

LIGHT AFTER SHADE.

All through the night I battled with my thoughts of love, — all the next day, while listening absently to my masters, — all the day following, and the day after that; but the victory was love's, not mine. At last, in despair, I sought audience with the head-master, and he appointed to speak with me in his reception-room.

"What is it, my son?" he gently asked, as I hesitated before him there. "I have seen these three days that all was not well with you, but have waited for you to speak."

"I come for help, my father. I am deep in trouble. I have been shaken with strange desires, and thought strange thoughts. I fear I can never enter heaven; sometimes, often indeed, I have wished not to go there. I am helpless, — I know not what to think, or what to do."

"Not wish to go to heaven?" echoed the head-master, with piercing gaze.

"Even so, my father," I answered, averting my eyes.

"Do you realize what you say? It is clear that you are in a state of temptation, but that is insufficient to explain such — madness."

I hung my head, and after a moment, he continued, with such sternness as he had never shown: "Can it be possible that you are to turn back now, after going so far?"

"Hear me, my father. Could I not remain always here in this intermediate world, and by teaching those arriving from the earth fully serve the Lord?" I asked wildly, bursting out with a thought which I had for hours revolved in mind.

"And wherefore? Do you wish to halt at the threshold, resting content with the sound only of the music and dancing within? Do you wish to sit in the gate after the bridegroom has gone in with His friends to the feast? Wherefore?"

"Because here, as I have observed, men and women live in marriage."

"Speak, and explain this mystery."

"I have seen," — I stammered, not daring to look up, — "I have seen, O my father, a woman, a young maid, and I love her. I have struggled hard these three days, and still I love her."

"And why *not* love her?"

Amazed, incredulous, I slowly lifted my eyes to the head-master's face, and saw — no sorrow, no rebuke, but a look of relief. And then I made answer, like one in a dream, —

"The Lord has said, 'For in heaven they are neither married nor given in marriage.'"

"Have you not yet learned," asked the head-master, in a tone of surprise, "that the angels live in marriage, — that tender love of married pairs is the very life of heaven, the inmost joy of those who dwell there?"

My heart leaped within me at these words. In great wonder and sore confusion, I felt that the sun was again shining; still, — still there was a cloud.

"But those words of the Lord, my father?"

"I will explain," was the reassuring answer. "You have learned from our Divine Word that the Lord when on earth spoke often only apparent truths in the ears of simple men who could not receive, and to those who would have profaned, the real truth, — which therefore was concealed or veiled from view. In that internal, genuine sense, these words, 'In heaven they are neither married nor given in marriage,' signify that the marriage of good and truth cannot take place in man after he has entered the spiritual world, unless that marriage shall have already begun in the natural world. In other words, he cannot enter heaven unless he have truly begun the work of regeneration while on earth; for it is impossible for the marriage of good and truth to take place in a spirit confirmed in evil by his life in the body."

"And the angels live as man and wife?" I asked, half afraid that I should awake and find that the words which I hung upon were spoken from the land of dreams. "And is there"—I further asked — "is there offspring from their love?"

"No natural offspring. It is according to order and to Divine law that all men, or all angels, should be born in the natural world; therefore no children are born in heaven. The offspring of marriage there is ever increasing love to the Lord and the neighbor. This love of a man for a woman and of a

woman for a man is implanted in all from creation, and is the deepest and strongest inclination of the human race. After death it is not rooted out, — such is not the will of Him who is the Bridegroom and Husband of the Church as a bride and wife, — but lasts to all eternity, unclean and adulterous with the devils, who have made it so, but pure, chaste, and heavenly with the angels."

A song of gladness awoke in my heart; already my troubled soul was at peace.

"And I may then hope," I asked with confidence, "that some day I may marry this maid and live with her in heaven?"

"You may; but remember there are conditions set."

"Tell me what they are."

"A true and happy marriage is provided on earth for those who from their youth have loved, wished for, and asked of the Lord a legitimate and lovely companionship with *one*, and have scorned and loathed wandering lusts. The conditions here are similar, and if truly abided by, this greatest of all blessings will one day be yours. In order to prepare for the heavenly marriage, you must shun adulterous tendencies as infernal evils; and bear in mind that you cannot do this unless you likewise shun all other evils, for adulteries are the complex of all. Remember that if beauty alone conjoins, it is mere adultery; genuine marriage is a union of minds and of souls. Such a union originates in the marriage of good and truth, and in order to come into it you must so live that in your mind and heart truth may

be conjoined with good. This work you have already begun, and you may complete it here with us if you will. Then study diligently the Divine Word; let all your thoughts be conformed to and your affections governed by its teachings. So will you fit yourself to enter into a lovely union with an angel maid, whose every thought and desire will be in conformity with yours because yours will be in conformity with the laws of heaven.

"Such a union," the head-master concluded, solemnly, "is the happiest of all happinesses, the blessing of all blessings. Every day, my son, be it your care to reverently pray the Lord to lead you forward in preparation to receive this crowning gift of His love."

As my beloved master uttered these final words, I remembered my vow spoken in the presence of the lovely maid, — "Every day will I pray that I may see you again," — and, when dismissed, I walked forth into the open air repeating it fervently again and again.

The whole world was changed; the very physical aspect of our valley and the enclosing hills was glorified in my eyes, — eyes that roved from hill to hill and covered every object, though dimmed with happy tears.

"Every day, yea, every hour," I whispered, with quickening breath, "till I become fit to see her again, and then again and forever! — till the great day when she is mine, mine only, — till we together have found our final home, there to dwell with the prime of eternal youth endowered, our blended joys made glorions with love's undying torch!"

In the same hour while walking in our lovely valley alone, I came upon a strange adventure. As I thought deeply on the subject of the beautiful union of married pairs in heaven, suddenly there was uncovered in my mind the recollection of my mother, that sweet idol of my childhood who faded away and left us ere I was quite ten years of age. I remembered that my father had not married again, that my aunt — who was with my sister at the time of my own last illness — came to the house in order to care for us, and that six years later my father also left us to enter the spiritual world. As the angels lived in marriage, these, my beloved parents, must now dwell together as in the world. Oh that I might see them! Where were they now, and why had I not inquired before? Was it because, under the Divine Providence, I had been withheld therefrom till now for good and sufficient reasons? Or, was it because the long separation had caused them to so completely fade away from my affections that the recollection of them now rarely entered my mind? The latter seemed impossible, and yet I could not recall having once inquired after them in thought since my arrival in the spiritual world.

I inquired now most earnestly, especially with regard to my mother, whom I remembered with a more tender affection. Walking forward in a lonely place, I thought of her with an absorbed interest, wondering if it were possible, and intensely desiring, that I might be allowed to see her. And anon I had my wish. All at once, as I raised my eyes, I saw her standing in the path, only a few feet in front of me.

It was unmistakably my mother, but so changed! — so much younger, so much more beautiful. It was truly she, — she whose dear face was pictured in tenderness on my heart.

"Mother!" I cried, hastening to her, uttering words of affection. I threw my arms round her and kissed her face, as she smiled on me tenderly.

"You are transformed," I said, "and the transformation is so beautiful!"

"And this is Oswald, — my little Oswald," she rejoined, in the soft low tones which I well remembered, and which were now even more musical. "You, too, are transformed," she added, standing away and looking at me.

"But I am still your son, and you are my mother."

I detected a slight alteration in the expression of her face. "That was the tie on earth," she answered gently, "but our relationship is now changed. Here it is rather that of brother and sister, or of friend and neighbor."

This did not quite please me. I was blinded by my old natural feelings, by the tenderness of my childhood's love, now newly awakened, and I did not understand.

"What does this mean?" I asked, in a changed voice.

"I thought you knew, Oswald," my mother answered kindly, a shade of regret upon her face. "Have not your teachers instructed you that in the spiritual world natural relationships are no longer in force?"

"O mother!"

"I am no longer your mother in that sense, Oswald. We all have one common mother here, the Church, and one Father, the Lord. And it is spiritual affinity, not the mere tie of blood, which unites those who dwell together."

"Then are we not to dwell together?"

"That is known only to the Lord. When you are fully prepared it may be that you will be led to the same heavenly city where I reside, and if so, I shall be glad; but after you are there you will live separate from me in your own house, with your own beloved wife."

"But my father,—does he not live with you, in the same house?"

She did not answer, and, turning suddenly, looked toward a grove of trees on our right. And then I saw advancing toward us a man angel, noble in face and comely in form. He came close to her, encircling her waist with his arm, meanwhile saluting me graciously. My mother leaned her head against his shoulder, her face suffused with an indescribably lovely light as it was upturned to him. I now noted that she wore a beautiful, shining robe, which seemed to vary from soft tints of blue to those of red as she moved, and, wonderful to behold, as she turned toward her companion the rosy tints brightened to a flame-like hue. Her companion was beautiful, and no doubt good, but he was not my father; I could not look upon him with friendship where he stood.

"Mother, what does this mean?" I asked, amazed and indignant.

With her head still resting against the stranger,

she turned her face toward me and answered: "He who was your father is among the good, but he does not dwell with me. *This* is my beloved husband."

I could not speak, so turbulent were my thoughts and feelings. My mother after a moment continued: "We cannot remain with you longer in your present state. Your teachers will instruct you." After another slight pause she added: "May all go well with you, Oswald. Some later day, when you are wiser than now, it may be that we shall see each other again."

And then, ere I could open my mouth, they were gone; they had passed behind the veil, fading in a twinkling from my view. I followed after them, calling, for a few steps, but was answered only by silence and vacancy. Half an hour later I strode back to the college, sought speech with the headmaster, and told him of my adventure.

"I perceive that you are in a state of temptation," he said to me ere I had spoken. Then, after he had heard everything: "What is your complaint? She who was your mother said truly that all have one mother and one Father here. Your relation to her is no longer that of a son, but only of a friend whom she tenderly esteems.

"And wherefore should you grieve because those two angels who were father and mother to you on earth do not now dwell together in heaven?" he continued, as I sat silent. "Do you not know that they would still be man and wife if their union were conducive to their best interests? Do you think our merciful Lord capable of ordaining that two angels

internally unsuited to each other should remain in marriage to eternity? In this age few of the marriages made on earth are true marriages, and, through the mercy of the Lord, all not so are here dissolved, new and fitting alliances being formed. Though your father and mother unquestionably lived together in outward peace and were regenerating, they were, as is now evident, not in true internal sympathy, and in heaven, therefore, each was joined with that one — that only one — capable of furnishing the blessed interior satisfaction and happiness which they could not give each other.

"If you are still troubled," the head-master concluded, "retire to yourself and pray the Lord that you may see your earthly father. If it be best for you, your request will be granted, in which case you will hear all that I have told you confirmed."

"I need not to do this, my father," I answered, humbly and in shame, quite overwhelmed by what I heard. "I have been most foolish, and I am rebuked. It becomes clear to me more and more how full of evil I am, — how little I genuinely trust in the Lord."

"It is in your power to become wiser through this experience, and fully to atone," was the gentle response.

I saw and understood it all now; it was as clear as the light of noonday. The recollection of my Cousin Mary's unhappiness returned to me and accused me. What if the insufferable bond which bound her to my Cousin Paul had never been loosed!

Nevertheless, not many days afterward, I did seek and obtain speech with my father, and also a second time with my mother. As I rested beneath an olive tree at no great distance from our college, absorbed in thinking of my parents and earnestly desiring to see them, they both appeared to me there, accompanied by their heavenly consorts. It was an hour of much and sweet instruction. The subject of conversation chosen by this noble company was heavenly marriage; and, being now prepared, I listened with decorum, intelligence, and sympathy, meanwhile duly sensible of the honor they did me by their presence, and profoundly grateful for all they taught me. They exhibited so many tokens of friendship, and were so gentle with me, that at last I fearlessly opened to them all my heart, telling of the maid whom I had found among the almond trees, and could not forget. At this recital they one and all showed signs of pleasure, bidding me trust in Heaven, and hope to win her at the proper time.

"Give this to her when she is yours, dear Oswald," my mother said, with radiant smiles, taking from her finger a ring set with stones which flashed as from a living flame.

And as my heavenly guests rose to take leave of me (there were garden chairs at hand and fruit and wine upon a table), this tender and beauteous angel who was on earth my mother kissed me solemnly upon the forehead, saying: —

"Doubt not, my Oswald, that we shall meet again, when you have won the maiden whom you love."

XXI.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE RAINBOW.

THESE parting words of my mother among the angels went with me for days, calming my thoughts and perfuming my spirit as with the sweetness of a heavenly benediction. My mental horizon was now clear. The sublime mystery of human life was solved. The wondrous and beautiful spectacle of two human souls knit together in love, and through that heaven-sent love drawn nearer and nearer to the all-creating Source whence it flows as a stream, filled me more and more with an enduring recognition of the Divine goodness and mercy. Every day I asked myself, How can man do less than glorify in his heart the gracious Lord who, from love Divine, has provided a heaven of such superlative delight and peace for those of His creatures who will but live according to heavenly order, and so fit themselves to dwell there? I felt no more concern for the future, content to await the time when Providence should lead us, the one to the other, and I might claim the maid I loved as mine own forever. For she, and she alone, was mine, as I knew and felt from my whole soul.

None the less did I experience the thrill of a new

and great joy when it was announced that a festal day was near on which the two colleges would worship conjointly in a place called the Valley of the Rainbow; and when the day came I felt as one feels who goes to his wedding. The short intervening distance was walked by the students, arrayed in their banqueting robes; but all the masters rode on horses, except their leader and head, who travelled in a beautiful carriage, similar in many respects to the ancient chariot, but provided with a long seat covered with purple cushions.

The Valley of the Rainbow was adjacent to the territory surrounding the college of the maidens, and at no great distance from the spot where I first found my love among the myrtles and the almond trees. The place was beautiful beyond all telling. It was, in truth, a paradise of such loveliness as may not be pictured in words. Yet it may be well to mention the flowers of indefinite variety, many of them unknown on earth, which grew spontaneously in arcs or in circles, their arrangement being with relation to color, thus producing a rainbow effect. There were lawns where roses of every conceivable color — not excepting soft tints of green and blue — thus placed themselves in continuous and beautiful series.

The very trees stood in circles, and even here, through the varying shades of green, the rainbow was suggested. Toward the centre of the valley was a beautiful and extensive grove, wherein the arrangement was such that one species succeeded another according to excellence and correspondence.

The outermost circles of this continuing spiral or gyre of trees were filled with oaks, and leading farther inward successively were plane-trees, chest nuts, laurels, beeches, pines, firs, cedars, myrtles, figs, pomegranates, the almond, the almug, the orange, the palm, sweet-scented shrubs, the vine, the olive, and in the centre, with wonderful gyrations and interlacings, paradisiacal trees unknown on earth, their fruit as it were of shining gold, and their leaves of seeming silver edged with glistening emeralds.

In this centre there was a living temple of green, formed by interlacing trees, and here it was our blessed privilege to worship. As we drew near three angel priests from heaven were seen standing before the door clothed in shining garments, the first in purple, the second in blue, and the third in white; and when they had entered, a rainbow of amazing splendor and beauty appeared above the temple. Afterward the head-master instructed us that the rainbow represented regeneration, and that none but the regenerate could approach this valley. Entering the temple among the last, I saw that the three angel priests were now in the chancel, and that the one in the purple robe stood before a table of gold beneath an arching canopy which flashed with precious stones. Upon that golden table or altar lay the Divine Word, and when it was opened the whole chancel was filled with the brightness of its radiating halo. The three officiating priests stood bathed in its glory, — especially the one in the purple robe, who read aloud from the Word, — and were

now in very truth, as to the very externals of their bodies and garments, angels of light.

I had not yet seen the face of my love, but during that beautiful service of reading and responses, of prayers, of wise words of instruction, and of soul-felt singing, I rested in a happy calm; the Lord ruled, and all would be ordered well. If there had been some faint pangs of disappointment these were soon forgotten when the hour of the banquet arrived; for then I saw her. During two hours or more, as we sat there, always could I see her face.

For, later in the day, when the temple service had come to an end, the members of the two colleges feasted together. The spot chosen was within the precincts of the wonderful grove, but not in its centre. The banqueting table was similar to that in our college, which has been already described. The youths were ranged along the right, the maidens along the left, the teachers of both colleges being seated in pairs at the head. It was afterward made known to me that our masters were really angels of heaven, and that the angel mothers of the other school were their wives. And, what filled me with wonder, it was said that there was a way between the two colleges which only the angel masters and mothers knew, a way so short as to make the two places practically one — to them. The masters and their wives were thus always together, except when in the activity of their duties of instruction. These wives, who were mothers to the young girls under their charge, seemed almost as young as they, and

truly were more beautiful than any of them — excepting one, who sat there a very star among them all. To sit at the banquet in our college on festal days had heretofore seemed a happiness all complete, but now I knew that, as compared with this great feast, it was as light without heat, or as the paler tints of the rainbow without the red.

While we were still seated the head-master addressed the young men and maidens directly on the subject of marriage, of the loveliness and ineffable joys of a true union of souls, describing it as the very crown of angelic happiness, which was to be desired with the whole heart. He reminded them that this precious love originates in the marriage of good and truth, and that it can therefore find a real abiding-place only in the hearts of the regenerate. He also spoke of the particular representation of man and woman in this heavenly marriage: the husband, who in his inmost is the love of good and wisdom thence, representing good; and the wife, who in her inmost is the love of truth from the Lord in the husband, representing truth. Thus are good and truth eternally joined in every true marriage, the consorts having each individually joined truth with good in their own minds and hearts by confirming right thinking with right doing.

The head-master also spoke of beauty, deducing its origin from the union of good and truth, or of love and wisdom; the union of love with wisdom in a youth, and of wisdom with its love in a maiden. A maiden does not love wisdom in herself, but in a youth, and hence sees him as beauty, and a youth,

observing this in a maiden, sees her as beauty. The outward is in correspondence with this inward beauty. The chief external constituents of the beauty of the countenance are the red and white, and their lovely mingling; and the red belongs to good or love, and the white to truth or wisdom, love being red from its fire, and wisdom white from its light. Thus is the marriage of good and truth, or of love and wisdom, mirrored in the very faces of the angels.

As they listened, the young men looked across to the maidens, each to that one of his choice; and the maidens looked back, — not, indeed, with the ardor of the youths, but none the less with true tokens of friendship. And so with each and all the feast was a feast of love, — of love to the Lord and to the neighbor, and of the love of regenerated and regenerating man for woman. This was a foretaste of the joys of heaven itself,

Later there were games and dances, and delightful conversation. The angel masters and mothers were ever present, — indeed, they took part in the merry recreations, — and there was no opportunity for more than a few words of private speech; but what mattered that? That was according to order, and therefore good. Though the tongue might be silent, the face was there to speak. The science of facial speech is lost on earth, but is known in heaven. The eye was there to tell the soul's secrets. What mattered anything? — all was well. I could stand near my love; occasionally in the dance I touched her hand. And once — ah! once the wind lifted

some strands of her soft dark hair into my face. The whole world was one perpetual glory were she but near.

Love is indeed from heaven, for the true lover exalts the object of his tenderness as high above self as the stars are high above the earth.

In the Valley of the Rainbow that day we danced a dance in which all joined, and which was a wonder of intricate mazes, — in which I lost my love but ever found her again, — in which, whenever it was her turn to touch the hand of man, it so befell that I alone was there and she touched mine; in all the mazes of that gay dance did she touch none but me.

"She is mine, — mine alone," was the thought which came and came again in a flood of rapture, as I observed this ever-favoring chance which was far more than chance.

XXII.

THE JEWEL OF HUMAN LIFE.

BUT months of study and struggle were yet to pass ere my wedding garment would be complete. As I sat at the college banquet on festal days and listened to the appointed student delivering his speech, as I watched the soul-stirring spectacle of the placing of the victor's chaplet upon his head by an angel of heaven, or saw him return to his seat still unprepared, — as was now and again the case, — I wondered when my time would come. I felt that the time *would* come, and was not impatient, being the more truly content to wait from seeing my beloved on occasional golden days. Trust and confidence in the Lord of all goodness had grown with me, but I was still open to temptation. I was not yet able, the power had not yet been given me, to shut out every vestige of evil from my intention and thought. In the daily, searching self-examination I could still detect traces of the inclination away from the good and true. There were times when my attitude in thought toward my brother students was not wholly one of love and charity; the old spirit of rivalry, of jealousy, with the accompanying tendency toward injustice, slumbered only, and was not dead. Worse than this, there were times when I was infested

with the thought of my own worthiness, oblivious of the truth that what worthiness existed was only adjoined to me and not my very own. The forms of discipline adapted to these evil states, which came to me under the Lord's providence, were many and various. The nature of one will be indicated here in the relation of an incident.

As I walked forth from the college alone one day, little by little a feeling of jealousy and unkindness toward certain of my unoffending companions was awakened and grew in my mind. Unrebuked at the outset, the evil suggestion soon gained a firm hold, and as it strengthened it so absorbed my interest that I scarcely noted the ominous changes in the surrounding vegetation, which from beautiful became indifferent, and presently barren and cheerless. Unheeding, I pursued my course, still cherishing my evil thoughts, until my state of infestation was as profound as sad, and until I lost my way in a wild and pathless region, where there was no sign of human or even animal life, and where I wandered for hours, affrighted by the loneliness and desolation. In the stunted, hideous vegetation, thistles, briers, thorns, brambles, nettles, and the deadly aconite were alone conspicuous.

It was clear from all these signs that I was approaching hell, whence come such feelings and thoughts, and whither they lead. Awakened to my situation all at once, in the pains of an overwhelming remorse I fell upon my face and humbly confessed that of myself I was nothing but evil, and, but for the restraining hand of the Lord, hell would

be my own proper place. Not until this repentance was most profoundly sincere, not until all enviousness was dead, and only tender friendship for my brethren filled my heart, could I find my way upward from that place. Thus, by being as it were let down into my former self, was I taught the wholesome truth that the good adjoined to me from above was not truly mine own, and should be ascribed to its only Source.

But the time was, at last, when the evil of my nature was fully and finally rendered quiescent, when I looked to the Lord in all things and willed better to my brethren than to myself, and now there came over me the feeling of which Alaric had spoken, — the premonition that my removal was near. And so, at last, it came about that one day in the banqueting hall, as I stood before my masters and my brethren and spoke words of truth inspired from heaven, a great light filled the place, and an angel was seen placing a wreath of laurel upon my head.

Nothing was ever more unexpected; I thought of and was intent only on the truth which it was my blessed privilege to speak. Having uttered the last word, I stood still for one moment before moving to take my seat. It was then that the light shone and the angel came. The touch of his hands in placing the chaplet on my head was to me as a benediction from the Most High, and I could have fallen on my face and worshipped. But the angel took my hand and led me through that mysterious door into that chamber where Alaric had disappeared. A single glance revealed far more magnificence than

any other part of the college could boast, for the eye rested on walls covered with beautiful and significative frescos in silver on a ground of gold, and on a floor formed of one single glistening dark red stone. Into this retreat all the masters followed us, and their leader and head, receiving a beautiful garment from the angel, whom with profound satisfaction and pleasure I now recognized as Ariel, thus addressed me: —

"You have now, dear friend and brother, fully and finally prepared yourself to enter that society of heaven for which you are by nature best fitted, and where you can be most interiorly useful and happy. You have become spiritually clothed from the Lord, and so approach the marriage feast of eternity, wearing the required nuptial robe. It is therefore fitting that you should be externally clothed in correspondence with your internal state, and you are now presented with this *wedding garment*, given to you from the Lord, and brought by this heaven-sent messenger," — glancing toward Ariel.

"With all my heart and soul I bless and thank the Lord," I answered, deeply moved.

Then Ariel and the head-master stripped me of the banqueting robe and put upon me the heavenly garment, which shone softly, as from an inward light, and which was rich and beautiful in color. Thus clothed, I was conscious already of a great change, and knew that heaven was near. The angel Ariel now stepped to the other end of the room and threw open a door.

"Go forward through that door," said the head-master, "and you will find the jewel of human life." After a moment he added: "We do not now bid you farewell, because we shall presently see you again."

Smiling and wondering, looking with affection from my dear master to beloved Ariel, I walked forward from between them.

The door opened on the outer air, and, descending the steps, I found myself in a garden of such wonderful beauty that I was amazed, asking myself how it was that I had not heard the fame of it, since it was entered from our college. The Valley of the Rainbow near the home of the maidens and their angel guardians was beautiful, but this — ah! this was most beautiful — this garden of perennial bloom, where the trees bore blossoms and fruit together. The red and the white, the blue and the gold, the green and the purple, — all the colors were there in the leaves, and the flowers. And the odors which floated with the gentle breezes seemed, as they entered through my nostrils, to exhilarate my very mind and warm my very heart. With every sense alive to the beauty of the place, I followed a winding path through murmuring groves, past crystal pools, and across laughing, flower-rimmed streams, far into the paradise, wondering where I should find and what was that "jewel of human life" which they bade me seek.

At last, at a turn of the path, where all the beauties of the garden seemed centred, I came suddenly upon my beloved.

"It is she!" I cried aloud, and leaped and went to her.

She did not shrink from me; she smiled, and as always there was hope and heaven in that smile. I took her hand and held it fast.

"O my beloved!" I said, "when before we met among the myrtles and the almond trees it was not permitted me to speak the words of love which died upon my lips, but now — now I feel, I know, there is none to stay me if only *you* be not offended."

"Say on," she answered, low and graciously.

And then — then was heaven tasted in the interchange of love's dear tokens. In that sweet time she confessed that she had known, had felt, what was to be, on that first golden day when I came and found her with her dove. I had hoped only, but she had *known*.

"They told me I should find a precious jewel in this garden," I said to her anon. "I have found it, — it is you."

She smiled in answer first, but in her smile I could not trace a full assent. "So also they told me when the door was opened to this place," she said. "And we indeed have found it, but the jewel is not you, nor is it I."

"It is our love," I said, as the truth was suddenly clear to me. "The tender love of married pairs in heaven or in earth, — this is the 'jewel of human life.'"

I now understood that she, too, had been sent forth prepared for heaven from the school of the maidens, and had been given a wedding garment suited to her state. As this was mentioned, she glanced downward at her beautiful clothing, and, my

eyes following hers, I saw that it was a rich silken robe with trimmings of golden leaves and diamond blossoms. The color of the garment resembled that of the fire-opal, and, as my love's eyes returned to my face, I saw the rose tints in it brighten as the foam-bow brightens in the wind. Her face, too, brightened, flamed; but with an added expression of heavenly loveliness rather than with color. As I saw all this I remembered the beautiful ring given me by my angel mother and her injunction touching its disposal, and, taking it from my finger, I placed it on that of my beloved, as commemorative of this golden hour in which we gladly gave ourselves to each other, and as a sign of the bond between us which would be loosed no more forever.

A true realization of our position now dawned on us: this was our wedding day. These garments were truly ours individually, since they were representative of the spiritual clothing of good and truth, of which we had separately possessed ourselves; but they were at the same time ours conjointly, for they were to be worn at our wedding. In a double sense were they our wedding garments, it being manifestly intended that we should enter heaven together as a married pair. What shall I say of our feelings as this became clear to us? — of our interchange of thoughts afterward when we had found a seat in a lovely bower among sweet shrubs and flowers? — of our words and tokens of love as we promised ourselves each to the other to eternity?

It is better that nothing be said, since these things are inexpressible. But let this be said: anon our

thoughts turned reverently toward the Source whence flows all our happiness and our very life. Then hand in hand we kneeled upon the lush grass and flowers at our feet, lifting our inner eyes toward the glorious Sun of heaven. And in such words as these — words which took form, in that heavenly tongue, as flowing rhythm — did I give utterance to the thoughts which stirred our souls: —

"O loving Father of eternity, O Divine Giver of all love and light, O Prince of peace and joy, O merciful Lord and Saviour, we bare our hearts before Thine eyes and lift our souls to Thee! Look down on us from the high seat of Thy Divine majesty and glory; deign now to accept us as Thy thankful servants and as willing subjects of Thy heavenly kingdom. Grant us there to walk uprightly before Thee to eternity, praising Thy name forever, in purity of thought and doing. We know, O loving Father, that Thy blessing pours forth ever on Thy creatures, even as the sun's rays fall upon the earth unsparingly, yet now we ask Thy benediction on this our wedding day. Give to us that we may be married as good and truth are married; give to us that love's undying torch, which lives alone from Thee, may burn within our hearts, our lives ennobling to eternity. Loving Father, Thou knowest all our needs and all our thoughts before we speak, yet we thus speak from hearts abrim with thankfulness for all the glorious happiness which is ours from Thee."

XXIII.

WE CROSS THE BORDER.

As we rose to our feet, tears of great joy in our eyes, and hand in hand walked forward from that place, two turtle doves flew up from some near perch and saluted us with their soft, caressing notes. This seemed the signal for the joyous uplifting of a thousand bird voices among the neighboring trees. Farther along the path, while this sweet harmony still lingered in our ears, young lambs and fawns came forth from the groves on either hand, and looked upon us with fearless and friendly eyes. And then, as the bird song died away, a chorus of beautiful human voices grew upon our hearing, and anon we passed an assembly of lovely young virgins who stood on either side of our path, smiling upon us and singing a song of love. And then — O miracle of beauty! — it seemed to us that a shower of golden rain descended upon us from on high.

"The outward representative of the inward descent of the Divine blessing, for which we prayed, mayhap," I whispered, when it had ceased.

We now saw that we were approaching the limit of the garden. Before us stood a house of a pearl-like stone, built into the wall after the manner of

park lodges, but much larger. As we drew near a man rose from a seat near by, and, throwing wide the door, courteously invited us to enter. Ascending the steps and passing through the doorway, we found ourselves in a beautiful hall or reception-room, where, all in wonder and good pleasure, we saw to the right and to the left the familiar faces of friends. All the masters from my school and the angel mothers from my love's were there, besides Ariel and my dear comrade Alaric. A second glance showed still another, and this a stranger, — a very noble-looking man in rich flowing robes of a flaming purple.

As we entered, hesitating, leaning together and looking about us, this noble person fixed his eyes upon us, and, with solemn emphasis, pronounced the words: —

"May the Divine blessing be upon you!"

Then my beloved master slowly and earnestly repeated the same, and after him the chief of the angel mothers. Following, each of the remaining masters and angel mothers then singly uttered the words; and lastly Ariel and Alaric. Then all together, as with one voice: —

"May the Divine blessing be upon you!"

And we stood there with throbbing hearts, thrilled to the soul. Assuredly this was the Lord's own benediction spoken through the mouths of His angels.

"We thank you from our hearts, good friends," I said at last, profoundly calm. There was no added word from my beloved, but her radiant face returned full thanks.

The head-master, in the beautiful garments of a priest of heaven, now stood forth, lifted his hands, and, when we had knelt before him, prayed for a benediction from the Most High upon us in our new estate.

"We are gathered here," said he, when the prayer was ended and he had lifted us to our feet, "to witness, confirm, and consecrate your consent to your eternal union. The state of those betrothed may be likened to spring before summer, and to the blossoming of trees before the fruitage, for although the betrothal is the internal union, with the promise of all that is to come, it is not as yet the complete marriage. Betrothals, and the subsequent intimate association of the pair, effect the conjunction of the internal man; by means thereof the mind of the one is conjoined with the mind of the other, and thus a marriage of the spirit takes place before the marriage of the body.

"I perceive that you have regarded this as your wedding day, and truly it is your wedding day as to the highest and most real essential; for it is the day of your giving yourselves to each other, the day of the marriage of your souls, which is indeed the real marriage. The day of your external marriage still awaits you, but will not be long delayed, for I perceive that already you are inmostly united. As soon as you have found your place in the heavenly society which is to be your eternal home, you will be made one as to body, even as you now are one as to soul."

The ceremony being concluded, the head-master

led us to the noble person who had blessed us first, and who was now seated in an elevated chair of gold beneath a beautiful arching canopy.

"You must," explained the master, "be presented to your Prince, who has come here to do you honor on the day of your betrothal, — the noble ruler of that heavenly society to which you now belong."

From the first moment I loved him, and with true devotion and reverence I that day bowed before my Prince and kissed his hand, listening then with gladness to the wise and kindly words accompanying his congratulations.

"You will dine with me at the palace to-day," he told us, ere he ceased to speak, "and as soon as your state of preparation is complete your nuptials will be celebrated there, after which the young men and maidens of the court, singing heavenly choruses, will precede and follow your chariot through the streets to the eternal home which has been provided for you by the Lord.

"And then," he added, speaking to me singly, when I had made fitting response, "in a few days you will receive appointment of duty in the use which you have chosen."

After this all of the company, one after another, passed before us and pressed our hands, uttering words well chosen. Last of all Alaric.

"You were good to come and meet me, dearest friend," I said to him, in gratitude. And after he had spoken: "You, too," I said, — with a long look into the eyes of the loved one at my side, — "you, too, have your heavenly consort?"

"She is not far away, and you will see her shortly," he answered, with a glad flash of the eye.

But now wine had been poured into golden goblets and served, and, at the word of the Prince, all drank to the spiritual health and prosperity of the newly betrothed pair.

"And we," I said, as wine was given us, "we drink to our beloved Prince and brethren."

After this ceremony there was a sound from without, and a door opposite the one we had entered was opened, framing an extended view of a beautiful open country. The Prince then saluted the representatives of the two schools and descended to his chariot, smiling upon us as he passed and announcing: —

"You are now to follow me."

Thus ended that happy, festive hour, for now all the masters and angel mothers bade us farewell, — with expressions of joy rather than regret, thinking not of the parting but of our well-being and happiness. And then, escorted by Ariel and Alaric, we also descended to our chariot. The carriage of the Prince, which was of beaten gold with brass-tired wheels of a red wood, and which was drawn by twelve white horses, had now moved forward to give place to ours, which was also of gold and drawn by white horses four in number.

"How?" I asked, surprised, when my love and I were seated, and Alaric stood on the right and Ariel on the left of our chariot, "are we to ride and you to walk?"

"Even so," was Ariel's answer, with a smile, "we

would thus do you honor on this day of your great happiness."

And in such state we moved forward.

As presently we climbed the slope of a hill, along a beaten track adorned with vine-twined laurels, the Prince's chariot leading, I observed with wonder the unfamiliar country on either hand, and at the hill-top I drew in my breath with almost a gasp, for there, spread out before us, was the most beautiful valley I had ever beheld, and in the blue distance the glistening domes and spires of a great city. I looked around me, behind me, for some familiar feature, but all was changed.

"What is this?" I asked of the two friends walking at our side. "I can no longer see the college building of my masters. Surely we have not yet gone so far."

"You cannot see it," answered Ariel,—and both he and Alaric smiled upon me tenderly,—"because you have passed beyond the veil."

"The veil? When did we pass? I did not know—"

"No one ever knows."

"And we are now"—I looked into the radiant face of my beloved and back to Ariel again—"and we are now in—"

"In the Lord's heavenly kingdom."

THE END.

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